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Andy BYFORD

**IMPERIAL NORMATIVITIES
AND SCIENCES OF THE CHILD:
THE POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE USSR, 1920s–1930s***

Deviation and Difference in the Pedology of National Minorities

The multiethnic composition of the vast Eurasian territory of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union was prized by researchers in the human sciences for the opportunities it offered for the exploration of human diversity.¹ In the course of the 1920s, heterogeneity along ethnoracial lines became an issue of particular interest for Soviet researchers whose work focused on *child* biopsychosocial development – those who were part of the field that became prominent in the early Soviet Union under the name “pedology.”

The sciences of child development arose as an international movement from around the 1880s.² The movement formed out of a host of disciplinary

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¹ Marina Mogilner. *Homo Imperii: A History of Physical Anthropology in Russia*. Lincoln, 2013; Francine Hirsch. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca, 2005.

² André Turmel. *A Historical Sociology of Childhood: Developmental Thinking, Categorization and Graphic Visualization*. Cambridge, 2008; Alice Boardman Smuts. *Science in*

and occupational projects that were still only emergent and marginal at the time and had stakes principally in the fields of education, psychology, and medicine. Over time these catalyzed the institutionalization of new domains of knowledge and occupational practice that have since become the norm in modern societies, including developmental and educational psychology, psychometrics, special needs education, pediatric care, child psychiatry, juvenile criminology, the anthropology of childhood, and many others.

Russia was already fully engaged in this movement in the late tsarist era, with a range of initiatives emerging at the intersection of several domains: the interest that Russian intelligentsia parents showed toward the upbringing of their progeny;³ the expansion of medical work into social hygiene;⁴ the efforts of Russia's teachers to enhance their professional status;⁵ the transformation of psychology as a scientific discipline;⁶ the training needs

the Service of Children. New Haven, 2006; Sally Shuttleworth. *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science and Medicine, 1840–1900*. Oxford, 2010; Janette Friedrich, Rita Hofstetter, Bernard Schneuwly (Eds.). *Une science du développement humain est-elle possible? Controverses du début du XXe siècle*. Rennes, 2013; Marc Depaepe. *Social and Personal Factors in the Inception of Experimental Research in Education (1890–1914): An Exploratory Study // History of Education*. 1987. Vol. 16. No. 4. Pp. 275–298; Marc Depaepe. *Experimental Research in Education, 1890–1940: Historical Processes behind the Development of a Discipline in Western Europe and the United States // Aspects of Education*. 1992. Vol. 47. Pp. 67–93; Marc Depaepe. *Zum Wohl des Kindes? Pädologie, pädagogische Psychologie und experimentelle Pädagogik in Europa und den USA, 1890–1940*. Weinheim, 1993; Evgenii M. Balashov. *Pedologiya v Rossii v pervoi tret'i XX veka*. St. Petersburg, 2012.

³ Catriona Kelly. *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890–1991*. New Haven, 2007. Pp. 296–305, 354–360; Andy Byford. *Parent Diaries and the Child Study Movement in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia // The Russian Review*. 2013. Vol. 72. No. 2. Pp. 212–241.

⁴ John F. Hutchinson. *Politics and Public Health in Revolutionary Russia, 1890–1918*. Baltimore, 1990; Nancy M. Frieden. *Child Care: Medical Reform in a Traditionalist Culture // David L. Ransel (Ed.). The Family in Imperial Russia*. Urbana, 1978. Pp. 236–59; Andy Byford. *Roditel', uchitel' i vrach: k istorii ikh vzaimootnoshenii v dele vospitaniia i obrazovaniia v dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii // Novye rossiiskie humanitarnye issledovaniia*. 2013. Vol. 8. <http://www.nrgumis.ru/articles/276/>; Andy Byford. *Professional Cross-Dressing: Doctors in Education in Late Imperial Russia (1881–1917) // The Russian Review*. 2006. Vol. 65. No. 4. Pp. 586–616.

⁵ Andy Byford. *Turning Pedagogy into a Science: Teachers and Psychologists in Late Imperial Russia (1897–1917) // Osiris*. 2008. Vol. 23. Pp. 50–81.

⁶ M. V. Sokolov. *Voprosy psikhologicheskoi teorii na russkikh s"ezdakh po pedagogicheskoi psikhologii // Voprosy psikhologii*. 1956. No. 2. Pp. 8–22; M. V. Sokolov. *Kritika metoda testov na russkikh s"ezdakh po eksperimental'noi pedagogike (1910–1916) // Voprosy psikhologii*. 1956. No. 6. Pp. 16–28; E. A. Budilova. *Pervye russkie eksperimental'nye*

of the emergent kindergarten movement;⁷ the appearance of institutions catering to children with special needs;⁸ the expansion of the network of correctional facilities for young offenders.⁹

After the October revolution, Russia's growing child science movement received unprecedented levels of support and recognition from the new Bolshevik regime.¹⁰ While it remained multidisciplinary in character, the diverse research focused on the child population was in the early Soviet Union fostered principally under the unifying label of "pedology." The latter was cast as the science supporting the socialist state's ambitious program for developing children's services and implementing universal education and child health care on entirely new grounds. As such, pedology was actively mobilized into the Soviet modernization project of the 1920s, which went beyond strategies of social engineering, assuming, in utopian fashion, the possibility of and the need for rationalizing the progress of humanity in a more fundamental way.

psikhologicheskie laboratorii // M. V. Sokolov (Ed.). *Iz istorii russkoi psikhologii*. Moscow, 1961. Pp. 296–357; A. A. Nikol'skaia. *Vozrastnaia i pedagogicheskaia psikhologiya v dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii*. Dubna, 1995; Andy Byford. *Psychology at High School in Late Imperial Russia (1881–1917 // History of Education Quarterly*. 2008. Vol. 48. No. 2. Pp. 268–277.

⁷ Lisa A. Kirschenbaum. *Small Comrades: Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917–1932*. New York, 2001. Pp. 8–32.

⁸ Kh. S. Zamskii. *Umstvenno otstalye deti: Istoriia ikh izucheniia, vospitaniia i obucheniia s drevnikh vremen do serediny XX veka*. Moscow, 1995.

⁹ Kelly. *Children's World*. Pp. 182–190; L. I. Beliaeva. *Stanovlenie i razvitie ispravitel'nykh zavedenii dlia nesovershennoletnikh pravonarushitelei v Rossii (seredina XIX – nachalo XX vv.)*. Moscow, 1995.

¹⁰ On Soviet-era pedology see: Raymond A. Bauer. *The New Man in Soviet Psychology*. Cambridge, MA, 1952; F. A. Fradkin. *Pedologiya: mify i deistvitel'nost'*. Moscow, 1991; A. V. Petrovskii. *Zapret na kompleksnoe issledovanie detstva // Represirovannaia nauka*. Leningrad, 1991. Pp. 126–135. V. F. Baranov. *Pedologicheskaiia sluzhba v sovetskoi shkole 20–30-kh gg. // Voprosy psikhologii*. 1991. No. 4. Pp. 100–112; P. Ia. Shvartsman, I. V. Kuznetsova. *Pedologiya // Repressirovannaia nauka*. Vol. 2. St. Petersburg, 1994. Pp. 121–139; Aleksandr Etkind. *Eros nezvozhnogo: Istoriia psikhoanaliza v Rossii*. St. Petersburg, 1993. Pp. 311–341; A. M. Rodin. *Iz istorii zapreta pedologii v SSSR // Pedagogika*. 1998. No. 4. Pp. 92–98; E. Thomas Ewing. *Restoring Teachers to Their Rights: Soviet Education and the 1936 Denunciation of Pedology // History of Education Quarterly*. 2001. Vol. 41. No. 4. Pp. 471–493; Nikolai Kurek. *Istoriia likvidatsii pedologii i psikhotekhniki*. St. Petersburg, 2004; Balashov. *Pedologiya v Rossii*. Carlo Trombetta. *La pédologie russe et soviétique: Naissance et chute d'un mouvement scientifique // Friedrich et al. (Eds.). Une science du développement*. Pp. 65–81; Irina Leopoldoff. *La science du développement de l'enfant en URSS: Chroniques de la revue Pedologija 1928–1932 // Ibid*. Pp. 83–105.

Child sciences had, more generally, arisen around the concept of “development” (physical and psychological), the “laws” of which it was the task of these sciences to establish.¹¹ “Development” was, in this context, elaborated as a fundamentally *normative* concept: the variability of human life in its early, formative period was systematized through developmental norms, against which individual manifestations were to be measured as *deviations* from it. Researchers in the child sciences (internationally) were particularly enthused by the possibility of articulating norms in quantitative terms, which was why anthropometric and psychometric methods and technologies, and their outputs (e.g., body indexes and intelligence quotients), became so important to this field.¹²

However, the sciences of child development (like the human sciences more generally) also confronted the problem of *difference* in the human population. “Difference” was not reducible to “deviation” (from a particular norm), but implied the identification of distinct “kinds” within the human population that appeared to require the creation of *parallel sets of norms*, each specific to a given human category defined as “different.”¹³ Human “difference” was in part constructed through the very formation of such distinct sets of biopsychosocial norms, meaning that science played a major part in its constitution. At the same time, “difference” was an inherently political category, created by political means and through political work, rhetoric, and power (whether state- or social-movement-led). Francine Hirsch

¹¹ Turmel. *A Historical Sociology*.

¹² J. M. Tanner. *A History of the Study of Human Growth*. Cambridge, 1981. Gillian Sutherland. *Ability, Merit and Measurement: Mental Testing and English Education, 1880–1940*. Oxford, 1984; Adrian Woolridge. *Measuring the Mind: Education and Psychology in England, c.1860–c. 1990*. Cambridge, 1994; Mathew Thomson. *The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics, Democracy, and Social Policy in Britain c. 1870–1959*. Oxford, 1998; John Carson. *Measure of Merit: Talents, Intelligence and Inequality in the French and American Republics, 1750–1940*. Princeton, 2006; V. M. Kadnevskii. *Istoriia testov*. Moscow, 2004.

¹³ On the concept of “difference” in this sense, see Steven Epstein. *Inclusion: The Politics of Difference in Medical Research*. Chicago, 2007. On “human kinds” see Ian Hacking. *Making Up People* // T. Heller, M. Sosna, D. Wellberry (Eds.). *Reconstructing Individualism*. Stanford, 1986. Pp. 222–36; Ian Hacking. *The Looping Effects of Human Kinds* // D. Sperber, A. Premack (Eds.). *Causal Cognition*. Oxford, 1995. Pp. 351–394. For the role that racial “difference” played in child sciences in the United States, see Katharine S. Bullard. *Children’s Future, Nation’s Future: Race, Citizenship, and the United States Children’s Bureau* // Dirk Schumann (Ed.). *Raising Citizens in the Century of the Child: The United States and German Central Europe in Comparative Perspective*. New York, 2010. Pp. 53–67.

has demonstrated persuasively how a distinctive differential structure of the Soviet Union along ethnic lines was constructed through the complex interaction of ethnographic science and the early Soviet politics of intra-imperial nation-making.¹⁴

Between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s, and especially in the period of Stalin's Great Break and the First Five-Year Plan (1928–1932), there arose within Soviet pedagogy a specialist subarea of research that came to be dubbed the “pedology of national minorities.”¹⁵ This subfield of the Soviet child sciences emerged in concert with the efforts of the Soviet state to incorporate “backward” populations living in more peripheral parts of the Union into the (normatively framed) Soviet body politic as part of accelerated economic, social, and cultural modernization. Social reformism and political reordering intersected here with an imperial-like civilizing mission and both were expected to be grounded in the scientific mastery of the laws of human evolution, history, and ontogenesis.

As this article will discuss, the pedology of national minorities became heavily embroiled in a complicated knot of contradictions in its attempt to account for and negotiate the ambiguous relationship between, on the one hand, normative *deviations* in the Soviet child population (a population that was expected to be unified into a single body-politic, especially through the expansion and standardization of the Soviet education system) and, on the other, *ethnoracial differences* within this population in the distinctive context of early Soviet efforts to manage the Union's federative structure along *ethnonational* lines through the Union's nationalities policy.¹⁶ Both

¹⁴ Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*. See also Roland Cvetkovski, Alexis Hofmeister (Eds.). *An Empire of Others: Creating Ethnographic Knowledge in Imperial Russia and the USSR*. Budapest, 2014.

¹⁵ N. I. Kudrimekova. *K voprosu ob istorii natsional'noi pedologii v 1920–1930 gody.* // *Sharovskie chteniia: materialy mezhvuzovskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii Novosibirskogo NGPU, 19–20 dek. 2002 g.* Novosibirsk, 2004. Pp. 214–220; Kurek. *Istoriia likvidatsii*; Iu. Slezkin. *Sovetskaia etnografiia v nokdaune: 1928–1938* // *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*. 1993. No. 2. Pp. 113–125. See also Jaan Valsiner. *Developmental Psychology in the Soviet Union*. Bloomington, 1988. Pp. 284–299. For a useful bibliography on psychological research into Soviet national minorities see Anton Yasnitsky. *Bibliografiia osnovnykh sovetskikh rabot po kross-kul'turnoi psikhonevrologii i psikhologii natsional'nykh men'shinstv perioda kollektivizatsii, industrializatsii i kul'turnoi revoliutsii (1928–1932)* // *Psikhologicheskii zhurnal Mezhdunarodnogo universiteta prirody, obshchestva i cheloveka “Dubna.”* 2013. No. 3. Pp. 97–113.

¹⁶ On the nationalities policy see: Ronald Grigor Suny. *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*. Stanford, 1993; Yuri Slezkine. *The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism* //

“deviation” and “difference” were articulated by scientific and political discourses alike; and this all took place in a context of turbulent political shifts, during which the legitimacy of any given normative framework remained highly precarious.

Research into the history of the pedology of national minorities has thus far focused mostly on the way in which political interests – especially the politics of the First Five-Year Plan, the Cultural Revolution, and the Soviet nationalities policy – shaped and interfered with this subarea of the Soviet human sciences.¹⁷ This article will, in contrast, analyze in greater detail the research and outcomes of the early Soviet pedology of national minorities as well as the discourses that surrounded this work and its findings. In doing so, it will focus specifically on the challenges faced by Soviet pedologists to define and measure *norms* of “development” for the Soviet Union’s multiethnic child population and the ambiguities that one finds across the diverse (coexistent and overlapping) conceptualizations of “development” that emerged in this context.

Children were identified as exemplary subjects of “development,” the broader social meanings of which went beyond ontogenesis or “childhood” as a period of human life. “Development” as metaphor could be and was extended as the normative and teleological structure (biological, sociological, or historical) to social life in general. It was in this context that children became the critical target group for mass normative evaluation, categorization, and streaming in “developmental” terms; and this specifically as a way of managing the Soviet Union’s project of rapid modernization. And yet, these efforts quickly ran into contradictions that reflected one of the main dilemmas of Soviet modernity as a sociopolitical experiment: namely, how to adapt universalizing thinking and utopian aspirations to an “imperial” reality marked by nonsystemic diversity.¹⁸

In this article I will analyze how this dilemma was articulated in a series of contrasting approaches that Soviet pedologists adopted in dealing with

Slavic Review. 1994. Vol. 53. No. 2. Pp. 414–452; Terry Martin. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*. Ithaca, 2001; Jeremy Smith. *Bolsheviks and the National Question: 1917–1923*. Basingstoke, 1999.

¹⁷ Kudrimekova. *K voprosu*; Kurek. *Istoriia likvidatsii*; Slezkin. *Sovetskaia etnografiia*.

¹⁸ On the distinctiveness of Soviet modernity see: David L. Hoffman, Yanni Kotsonis (Eds.). *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices*. New York, 2000; David L. Hoffmann. *Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914–1939*. Ithaca, 2011; Michael David-Fox. *Crossing Borders: Modernity, Ideology, and Culture in Russia and the Soviet Union*. Pittsburgh, 2015. See also the introduction, titled “The Science of Imperial Modernity,” in Mogilner. *Homo Imperii*. Pp. 1–14.

the problem of ethnoracial “difference” in the Soviet-wide child population. Starting with pedological work carried out in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, I look at: (1) controversial proposals to set *psychometric norms specific to individual ethnoracial groups*; and (2) the very differently motivated efforts to construct *ethnic-specific mental tests*, adapted from baseline Russian ones. Moving on to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), I examine: (3) the role that the pedology of national minorities played in managing *the problem of ethnic-minority schooling* in the context of the drive to standardize the Soviet education system; and (4) the quandary posed by *the most remote and isolated ethnic groups* whose “level of development” did not lend itself to precise, quantifiable measurement. Finally, I discuss how the pedology of national minorities contributed to two contrasting yet intersecting teleological narratives of “development” at this juncture: (5) the narrative of the cultural-historical evolution of higher mental functions articulated by Lev Vygotsky; and (6) the Stalinist narrative of the Soviet Union’s historic advance into socialism. Based on this, I argue that tensions and confusions between the notions of “deviation” and “difference” plagued this field in all the above contexts, and that these, significantly, evolved into contradictions that directly contributed to the demise of Soviet pedology more generally in the political turnarounds between the late 1920s and the early 1930s. It was by embodying the above contradictions of the project of Soviet modernization that pedology ended up as one of its infamous casualties.

The discussion that follows is based on specific cases of *published* research that were explicitly and abundantly cited at the time as exemplary of the “pedology of national minorities” as an emergent subarea of Soviet pedology, whether this meant initially showcasing this work as topical and promising, or later denouncing it for its methodological blunders and ideological “distortions.” Those who carried out this research and who were made to represent this subfield were not the household names of Soviet pedology, but were, for the most part, peripheral figures. However, prominent, Moscow-based, leaders of Soviet pedology at this time, including figures such as Aron Zalkind, Pavel Blonsky, Lev Vygotsky, and A. M. Shubert, all actively engaged with this research and sought, each in his or her own way, to inform or direct the work done in the peripheries. While the cases examined here were among the most cited at the turn of the 1920s–1930s, they do not exhaust the full range of pedological research on non-Russian populations that was being carried out at the time. Further, archive-based, research that goes beyond the debates found on the pages of professional

journals and that examines developments in other parts of the Union as well is, of course, indispensable for a comprehensive picture of how Soviet scientists studied ethnic minority children at this time, and how this work related to the Soviet nationalities and educational policy more generally. The primary aim of this article, however, is to demonstrate, on the basis of several prominent and representative, interconnected yet contrasting, cases, the importance that the tension between “deviation” and “difference” had in Soviet pedology of the 1920s–1930s, hoping thereby to open up the question of whether and how this tension might or might not be of relevance to other domains of the Soviet Union’s “imperial” predicament.

The Uzbek Norm: Between Anthropometrics and Psychometrics

Soviet pedologists recognized from fairly early on that the multiethnic composition of the Soviet Union offered valuable opportunities to carry out systematic comparative studies of the mental and physical development of different ethnicities across the Union’s territory.¹⁹ However, given the plural and fluid institutional structure of pedology in the early to mid-1920s, initial pieces of research in what subsequently became recognized as the “pedology of national minorities” owed less to top-down initiatives coming from the center and more to the efforts of researchers based in the non-Russian peripheries themselves. The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, created in 1924, became one of the key locations for this work in the mid-1920s, with researchers in Tashkent being particularly active.²⁰ Some of the earliest studies were carried out in so-called school-prophylactic clinics (*shkol’no-*

¹⁹ P. O. Efrussi. *Uspekhi psikhologii v Rossii: Itogi S”ezda po psikhonevrologii v Moskve 10–15 ianvaria 1923 g.* Petrograd, 1923. P. 10. At the first congress in psychoneurology in Moscow (January 10–15, 1923), the psychologist A. P. Nechaev argued that one should carry out a systematic comparative study of the mental development of children of different nationalities using the Binet-Simon test.

²⁰ On the delimitation of Soviet republics, see Arne Haugen. *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia*. New York, 2003. The Kirgiz and Kazakh ASSR remained within the RSFSR until 1936, while the Tadjik ASSR was part of the Uzbek SSR until 1929, when it gained the status of a Union SSR. Tashkent was initially controversial in that it was predominantly populated by Uzbeks, especially its old town, but protruded into the Kazakh steppe, with Tashkent’s new town including a sizable Kazakh population and being important for Kazakh trade, which is why it was also being claimed by the Kazakhs for their own republic. On Uzbekistan in the early Soviet era, see also: Douglas Northrop. *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*. Ithaca, 2004; Adeeb Khalid. *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in Early Soviet Uzbekistan*. Ithaca, 2015.

profilakticheskie ambulatorii), the task of which was to monitor the health of local schoolchildren through systematic medical checks.²¹ Tashkent had two such clinics, one in its new town and one in the old town. These clinics had several specialist rooms (*kabinety*) – dental, dermatological, ophthalmological, pediatric (or therapeutic), and anthropometric. The last two, and the latter in particular, also served as research bases, their staff publishing principally in the journal *Medical Thought of Uzbekistan*.

The research of doctors based at the new-town clinic focused on problems of physical development and health.²² They performed systematic body measurements of the local multiethnic child population (principally boys), using standard anthropometric instruments and techniques of the day, calculating their subjects' body indexes (especially the Pignet index – the ratio of height, weight, and chest size), while also classifying them by constitutional type (according to the systems of Ernst Kretschmer and Claude Sigaud in particular). They also did blood tests, especially for hemoglobin, to diagnose anemia, and the Pirquet test, to diagnose tuberculosis.

A number of studies that this clinic carried out between 1925 and 1927 led its staff to conclude the following: (1) that when measuring children's physical development it was essential to record the subject's ethnicity (alongside age and sex, which were already being recorded as a matter of course);²³ (2) that different ethnic minorities living in new-town Tashkent (Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tajiks) produced different outputs when measured against a single anthropometric standard, such as the Pignet body index, and certainly different from "European" populations – so much so that the vast majority of individuals belonging to certain ethnicities (e.g., 78 percent of Uzbeks) fell substantially below established norms, needing to be classified

²¹ On the role of medicine in Russian colonialism in Tashkent, see Cassandra Cavanaugh. *Biology and Backwardness: Medicine and Power in Russian and Soviet Central Asia, 1868–1934* // PhD dissertation; Columbia University, 2001. For more background on health care in Central Asia, on the example of Kazakhstan, see Paula A. Michaels. *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin's Central Asia*. Pittsburgh, 2011.

²² On what follows, see V. P. Shirokova-Divaeva. *Opyt primeneniia indeksa Pin'e v otnoshenii uchenikov korennogo naseleniia UzSSR* // *Meditinskaiia mysl' Uzbekistana*. 1927. No. 2. Pp. 73–76; A. Shishov. *Pokazatel' Pignet v pedometricheskoi praktike* // *Meditinskaiia mysl' Uzbekistana*. 1927. No. 5. Pp. 42–45; Kh. T. Glezer. *Nekotorye dannye o fizicheskom sostoianii detei korennogo naseleniia* // *Meditinskaiia mysl' Uzbekistana*. 1927. No. 2. Pp. 77–84; E. V. Kapusto. *Opyty raboty antropometricheskogo kabineta n/gorod. Tashkentskoi detskoi ambulatorii-dispansera* // *Meditinskaiia mysl' Uzbekistana*. 1928. No. 4. Pp. 52–61.

²³ Kapusto. *Opyty raboty*. P. 52.

as “unfit,” even when comprehensive clinical checks found them “fit” in other respects;²⁴ (3) that differences on ethnic grounds also applied when one compared developmental dynamics (i.e., patterns of bodily change by age), given that puberty, which carried with it a whole set of physical changes relevant to body proportions, appeared to commence at different ages in different ethnic groups;²⁵ and (4) that there were distinctions in other aspects of bodily development too, for example, the apparent prevalence of cryptorchidism (undescended testes) in “Eastern” ethnic groups.²⁶

In parallel with the body index, which had originally been developed for army purposes and which was meant to evaluate subjects in terms of functional fitness for military service or work, the Tashkent doctors also classified individual children and entire ethnic groups in terms of their constitutional type. The Uzbeks, for example, were, due to their relatively narrower chests, classified as belonging constitutionally to the “asthenic” or “respiratory” type, based on the classes proposed by Kretschmer and Sigaud, respectively.²⁷ Such typology of difference based on constitution did not, however, automatically assume a normative or hierarchical relationship along a single scale, as was the case with the body indexes.

The conclusion of the doctors working at the new-town clinic was that *different normative standards* were necessary for different ethnic groups, or rather, that *ethnic-specific correctives* needed to be introduced for existing body-index norms, which had been preset with “European” populations in mind.²⁸ Furthermore, following the 1925 instructions from the Commissariat of Health (Narkomzdrav), authored by the head of its anthropometric laboratory, V. V. Bunak, the clinic in the end decided to abandon the use of the Pignet body index altogether since it had proved inadequate and impractical for assessing the changeable physique of children and they instead opted for a *body profile* method (or method of “variation curves”), pioneered by the Swiss physical anthropologist Rudolf Martin – an approach that offered a bridge between the numerical body index and the descriptive constitutional type.²⁹ According to this system, values for different bodily measurements

²⁴ Shirokova-Divaeva. Opyt primeneniia indeksa Pin'e.

²⁵ Shishov. Pokazatel' Pignet.

²⁶ Glezer. Nekotorye dannye.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Shirokova-Divaeva. Opyt primeneniia indeksa Pin'e; Shishov. Pokazatel' Pignet; Kapusto. Opyty raboty.

²⁹ Kapusto. Opyty raboty. P. 53. On the influence of Rudolf Martin on V. V. Bunak as the key figure of early Soviet physical anthropology, see Mogliner. Homo imperii. P. 355.

were placed along a vertical grid in such a way that the ideally proportioned constitution was represented as a straight vertical line. What the doctors were expected to focus on, however, was not overall proportionality, but the *distinctive shape of the curve*, which gave a quantified graphic profile (for either individuals or groups), represented as an interconnected set of deviations from the vertical line.³⁰

In this research, the doctors at the new-town clinic invoked the concept of “race” usually through the term “racial characteristic” (*rasovaia osobennost'*) and specifically as a means of referring, in a very general way, to the idea of difference of bodily norm.³¹ What was meant by this was that different ethnic groups (*natsional'nye gruppy*, so not “races” as such), for example, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Tajiks (but also in other localities Jews and Ukrainians, for instance), each had a different normative body standard or constitutional type.³² The way “race” was invoked as *differentiator* was rather vague – for example, to contrast “European” and “native” (*tuzemnye*) populations. It was not used for the careful taxonomic differentiation of the Soviet population, that is, to identify specific groups, something that was being done through the Soviet concept of “nationality.”³³

Nonetheless, the idea of “race” as a complex of hereditary (i.e., reproducible and reproduced) properties found in a given population and manifesting itself in individual human organisms was taken for granted and deployed in this research in the following two more specific senses: (a) as an *ethnicized constitution* (i.e., when a particular generally defined constitutional type, such as “asthenic,” became identified with and attached to a particular eth-

³⁰ Kapusto. Opyty raboty.

³¹ E.g., Glezer. Nekotorye dannye. P. 77: “No osobenno my dolzhny obrashchat' vnimanie na rasovye osobennosti fizicheskogo tipa tuzemnogo rebenka.”

³² Kapusto. Opyty raboty.

³³ The fluidity and ambiguity of the concept of “race” in Russian and Soviet intellectual, social, and political history, and the way in which it related to other ways of framing population groups, has been well-recognized (while also causing much debate). This includes not just the relationship of “race” to “ethnicity” or “nationality,” but also to “class.” See, for example, Karl Hall. “Rassovye priznaki koreniatsia glubzhe v prirode chelovecheskogo organizma”: Neulovymoe poniatie rasy v Rossiiskoi imperii // A. Miller, D. Sdvizhkov and I. Shirle (Eds.). “Poniatia o Rossii”: K istoricheskoi semantike imperskogo perioda. Vol. 2. Moscow, 2012; Eugene M. Avrutin. Racial Categories and the Politics of (Jewish) Difference in Late Imperial Russia // Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History. 2007. Vol. 8. No. 1. Pp. 13–40; Mogilner. Homo Imperii; Eric D. Wietz. Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges // Slavic Review. 2002. Vol. 61. No. 1. Pp. 1–29; Francine Hirsch. Race without the Practice of Racial Politics. Slavic Review. 2002. Vol. 61. No. 1. Pp. 30–43.

nic group, such as the Uzbeks); and (b) as the *bodily norm of a particular ethnic group*, expressed in terms of an average body index or typical body profile for that group. It was against this notion of “racial” bodily/constitutional standard, composed of a specific series of measureable properties, that individual members of a particular ethnic group were then expected to be measured for “fitness.”³⁴ “Race” or “racial characteristics” – expressed both as an ethnicized constitution and as a bodily standard of a particular ethnic group – was then used by doctors in accounting for, say, particular health issues (e.g., susceptibility to certain illnesses).³⁵

“Race” in the above sense was invariably treated as only *one* of the factors of fitness and health specific to a given ethnicity, in the mix with others, including climate or habitat, and also, above all, way of life (in Russian *byt*, a notion that in this context included customary cultural practices, especially those related to hygiene and child care). All of these were treated as inherent to a given ethnonational group and as together marking out their “difference” in a complexly interconnected way.³⁶ Moreover, when accounting for the health of a particular group, living conditions were usually judged to be playing a more important role than “race.” The former included not just broadly defined hygiene practices but also the degree of exposure to clean air or infections in particular habitats and the consequent acquisition or not of immunity, for instance. Tashkent doctors were keen to show that ethnic groups that constitutionally, that is, “racially,” ought to be susceptible to a particular kind of pathology, or that were, on the contrary, healthy and robust, demonstrated, in fact, a reverse trend in certain contexts due to environmental

³⁴ Shirokova-Divaeva. Opyt primeneniia indeksa Pin'e.

³⁵ Shirokova-Divaeva. Opyt primeneniia indeksa Pin'e; Glezer. Nekotorye dannye. The question of the improvement of health in these populations could be understood as “eugenic” in a broad sense only. The research discussed here was not about the “improvement of the race” as such. For more on eugenics in late Imperial and Soviet Russia, especially its close relationship to biomedical and genetic research, see: Mark B. Adams. *Eugenics in Russia* // Mark B. Adams (Ed.). *The Wellborn Science: Eugenics in Germany, France, Brazil, and Russia*. Oxford, 1989. Pp. 153–211; Mark B. Adams. *Eugenics as Social Medicine in Revolutionary Russia: Prophets, Patrons and the Dialectics of Discipline-Building* // Susan Gross Solomon, John F. Hutchinson (Eds.). *Health and Society in Revolutionary Russia*. Bloomington, 1990. Pp. 200–223; Nikolai Kremmentsov. *Eugenics in Russia and the Soviet Union*; Alison Bashford, Philippa Levine (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*. Oxford, 2010. Pp. 413–429; Nikolai Kremmentsov. *The Strength of a Loosely Defined Movement: Eugenics and Medicine in Imperial Russia* // *Medical History*. 2015. Vol. 59. No. 1. Pp. 6–31. See also V. B. Avdeev (Ed.). *Russkaia evgenika: Sbornik original'nykh rabot russkikh uchenykh (khrestomatiia)*. Moscow, 2012.

³⁶ Glezer. Nekotorye dannye. P. 77.

factors (e.g., relative exposure to germs).³⁷ However, “racial characteristics” (i.e., a particular bodily standard/constitution) were still considered an essential fact(or), not to be forgotten, but always taken into account alongside other fact(or)s when assessing an individual who belonged to that group or, for example, when recommending particular prophylactic measures (such as extra physical education classes for the “narrow-chested” Uzbeks).³⁸

However, when Tashkent doctors started moving from the domain of bodily constitution and health to that of mental development, accounting for ethnic difference became a more complicated and controversial issue. The researcher who became especially interested in psychometrics was A. Shtilerman, a doctor based at the school clinic of old-town Tashkent.³⁹ Shtilerman’s research differed from that of his colleagues in the new-town clinic in that he concentrated strictly on Uzbek children (although he compared their figures to data available for “European” populations, both Western and Russian), and he envisaged his research as a comprehensive study that started with anthropometrics and health examinations, but extended to psychometrics and, finally, provided a detailed account of the children’s living conditions and especially their schooling environment, seeking to establish the consequences that all these different factors had on physical and mental health, as well as bodily, intellectual, and educational development.⁴⁰

When measuring the Uzbek children’s physical constitution, Shtilerman’s conclusions were broadly similar to those of his new-town colleagues – namely, that Uzbeks had different bodily and health standards from “European” populations. He too confined the term “race” to physical norms; however, he included here also norms that were the consequence of particular cultural practices, such as brachycephaly, the flattened back of the head, which was caused by local infant-care practices (namely, the custom of keeping the newborn child lying continuously on his/her back in a cradle called *beshik*). This “constitutional” feature of the Uzbek skull Shtilerman defined as *simultaneously* a fact of cultural practices (*bytovoe iavlenie*) and, given its physical manifestation, a racial characteristic (*rasovaia osobennost*).⁴¹

³⁷ Ibid. Pp. 82–84.

³⁸ Ibid. P. 84.

³⁹ Shtilerman’s key research is also reprinted in Kurek. *Istoriia likvidatsii*. Pp. 195–220. Kurek’s work highlights more generally the importance that research on national minorities played in the history of Russian pedagogy, and especially its demise.

⁴⁰ A. Shtilerman. *Byt i zdorov’e uzbekskogo shkol’nika* st. g. Tashkenta // *Meditsinskaia mysl’ Uzbekistana*. 1927. No. 2. Pp. 115–129.

⁴¹ Ibid. P. 124.

More generally, he deplored the conditions in which local Uzbek children were being raised and educated, seeing these as offering a clear explanation of why they seemed behind in terms of physical, mental, and educational development. At the same time, his clinical examination of his subjects' psychological health led him to conclude that they were exposed to fewer stresses and hence suffered less from neuroses and psychoses than, say, urban Russian schoolchildren or child vagabonds (*besprizorniki*).

The most controversial aspect of Shtilerman's study involved the testing of Uzbek children using the Binet–Simon and the short Rossolimo tests.⁴² While Shtilerman admitted that this part of his study was methodologically imperfect and hence only provisional, he still believed that his results evidenced that Uzbeks lagged behind “Europeans” and that the areas where they performed the worst were “higher processes,” namely, combinatory skills and operations with abstractions. However, in this first study, his interpretation of the mental testing data was confined to broad-brush evaluations and did not go into the problem of norms as such.

Shtilerman was inspired to follow up his initial study with another one focused specifically on psychometrics.⁴³ In this next project he tested a group of Uzbek children, boys and girls, this time in a rather more systematic way, while also paying greater attention to the design of the tests. Shtilerman's key finding was a significant “lagging behind of the Uzbek ‘scale’” (*otstavanie uzbekskoi ‘shkaly’*) in relation to the “European” one.⁴⁴ This outcome did not prompt Shtilerman to question the validity of the tests that he was using or the quality of his adaptations of them for the Uzbek population; nor did he analyze why his subjects were making particular errors or why they found certain tasks difficult. Yet his central conclusion was not simply a diagnosis of “backwardness” in his research subjects themselves; rather, it was a conclusion regarding the *measure* against which Uzbeks should be judged, that is, *the lag of the Uzbek norm*.

In effect, what Shtilerman was doing here was to argue a point similar to the one that his colleagues, the new-town doctors, were making regarding

⁴² On mental testing in late Imperial and early Soviet Russia, see: Andy Byford. The Mental Test as a Boundary Object in Early-20th-Century Russian Child Science // History of the Human Sciences. 2014. Vol. 27. No. 4. Pp. 22–58; Irina Leopoldoff. A Psychology for Pedagogy: Intelligence Testing in USSR in the 1920s // History of Psychology. 2014. Vol. 17. No. 3. Pp. 187–205; Kadnevskii. Istoriia testov. Pp. 295–379.

⁴³ A. Shtilerman. Materialy psikhologicheskogo issledovaniia uzbekskikh shkol'nikov st. gor. Tashkenta po pereredaktirovannomu kratkomu Rossolimo // Meditsinskaia mysl' Uzbekistana. 1928. No. 4. Pp. 42–51.

⁴⁴ Ibid. P. 43.

Uzbek *anthropometric* standards, namely, that a *corrective* needed to be introduced to existing “European” standards and that a separate “Uzbek scale” or norm needed to be established, against which Uzbek children could then be appropriately measured for “fitness” as relevant to the realities and requirements of their schooling. Shtilerman’s proposal, modeled on solutions used for body indexes, was that such a corrective would be a simple quantitative readjustment, essentially a “lowering of the bar” for the final quantitative outputs of the Binet–Simon or the Rossolimo tests. And indeed, when this kind of corrective had been proposed for the Uzbek body index, rather than the intelligence quotient, it was not nearly as controversial: given the Uzbeks’ constitutionally narrower chests, the assessment of their “fitness” (whether in the context of the military or labor or schooling) would be expected to take this into account, which would mean that the Pignet body-index standard would need to be corrected (i.e., lowered) for this population.

However, such a corrective acquired a different meaning when measuring Uzbek mental capacities. The problem was that mental functions could not be defined as measurable properties in quite the same way as height or weight or chest size. Some of the tests used by Shtilerman, especially the Rossolimo one, did assume that each component of the test series measured a particular mental function, producing a “profile” of differentiated psychological abilities (not unlike Rudolf Martin’s profile of body proportions), allowing the researcher to show, for example, that Uzbeks performed adequately for some functions (such as observation or visual memory), but less well for others (such as combinatory work or work with abstract hypotheticals). But mental functions, even when supposedly separable and measurable in discrete ways, were much vaguer concepts than body proportions and more interdependent, assuming also a certain hierarchical relationship between “lower” and “higher” ones. This meant that it was difficult to present a persuasive case for defining an altogether new “standard” or “scale” for Uzbeks, as Shtilerman had hoped, and especially not in such a crude way as a simple “lowering of the bar” for the overall quantitative output.

Put differently, what Shtilerman assumed could be understood as *difference* continued to be framed as *deviation* from a universal norm of mental development. This was why Shtilerman was soon accused of depicting the Uzbeks as less intelligent than the Russians. Shtilerman’s studies were publicly condemned as offensive and chauvinist by the first secretary of the Central Asian Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, I. A. Zelinskii.⁴⁵ In

⁴⁵ N. S. Kurek. O sotsial’noi istorii kul’turno-istoricheskoi psikhologii: Otvet B. G. Meshcheriakovu i V. P. Zinchenko // Voprosy psikhologii. 2000. No. 6. Pp. 67–72.

the years to follow, Shtilerman's work and methodology became the most cited example of bad practice in the pedagogy of national minorities, by politicians and fellow scientists alike. While much of this criticism was fair in some respects, given Shtilerman's methodological clumsiness and political naivety, it was also rooted in a certain misunderstanding. Shtilerman's errors were due to confusions that were not only his own, but were part of a much wider set of problems that arose in the difficulties of distinguishing constitutional "difference" from normative "deviation" when establishing psychometric norms while trying to factor "ethnoracial" diversity into the equation. And this was a problem not merely for the Soviet human sciences but also for the Soviet Union as a political project.

The Uzbek Tests: The Problem of Ethnic Adaptations

Tashkent was also home to professional psychometricians, who were more keenly aware of the methodological complexities that surrounded the measurement of mental abilities of different ethnic groups. The researchers in question were V. K. Solov'ev, who was based at the psychophysiological lab of the Central Asian Military District, and T. N. Baranova, who was based at the Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology of the Central Asian State University (Sredneaziatskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet; SAGU). In contrast to Shtilerman, the principal task of Solov'ev and Baranova was the adaptation of tests that had been designed centrally for the Russian-speaking majority in order to produce ethnic-specific versions suitable for use among local populations in the Uzbek SSR – first of all for the Uzbeks as the Republic's titular nationality. The creation of what came to be known as the "Uzbek tests" (*uzbekskie testy*) entailed rather more laborious ways of negotiating ethnic difference to that of simply providing a quantitative corrective to established "European" norms.

Solov'ev understood the purpose of mental tests quite pragmatically – the tests needed to assess "fitness" for the army or the school and to differentiate those with higher and lower abilities.⁴⁶ However, the problem that *ethnic adaptation* posed was rather different. Critical for Solov'ev was to ensure that the "Uzbek tests" – *different* as they had to be from the standard Russian

⁴⁶ On what follows, see: V. K. Solov'ev. Godichnyi opyt ispytaniia obshchei odarennosti uzbekov i metodicheskii analiz serii VSU RKKA 1927 g. // Psikhotehnika i psikhofiziologii truda. 1929. Vol. 2. No. 2–3. Pp. 151–167; V. K. Solov'ev. Iz opyta konstruirovaniia natsional'nykh testov // Sovetskaia psikhotehnika. 1933. Vol. 6. No. 1. Pp. 30–46. The tests in question were the Red Army tests, which were used for recruits and cadet schools, but they came to be used much more widely in the Uzbek SSR.

ones – measured exactly the same mental functions as the “Russian tests” in *essentially* the same way. The problem was ultimately that of “translating” (in a broad sense) the standard tests across different ethnic groups, taking into account the different ethnicities’ languages and culturally specific mental worlds that arose from their respective *byt*.

Solov’ev argued that the baseline tests would have to be nonverbal and image-based (*nemye* or *kartinochnye testy*). He believed that only this kind of test had the potential of generating a single universal measure (*edinaia shkala odarennosti*) across the whole of the USSR by eliminating the importance that different levels of education and literacy, as well as socioeconomic and ethnocultural background, might have on the ability of subjects to understand and solve the tests: “Only by using the series of nonverbal tests can one create a universal system of measuring intellectual ability across the whole Union, given its ethnically diverse population and the still high percentages of illiterates and semiliterates.”⁴⁷ This approach was also expected to eliminate the discrepancy between the levels of sophistication of the different languages into which the tests had to be translated, since so many ethnic-minority languages in the USSR were still imperfectly codified.⁴⁸ Thus, the design of the seemingly peripheral “Uzbek tests” became for Solov’ev a test case for the creation of a *universal* test that could be deployed across the totality of the USSR in its different ethnic versions.

In order to obtain tests that would produce a universal scale, Solov’ev statistically compared the test results of illiterate subjects in both the Uzbek and the Russian cohorts. His assumption was that education, which would vary by type of school and hence by ethnicity (given that educational practices and standards were unevenly developed in the different regions and languages), would inevitably affect the test results. Solov’ev’s aim was therefore to design tests that would measure the inherent state of mental capacity and ability, unaffected by class or education, culture or language.

This meant that the “Uzbekization” (*uzbekizatsiia*) of the tests was, paradoxically, not there to emphasize culture, but, on the contrary, to *eliminate* the influence that culture might play in skewing the solvability (*reshaemost’*) of particular tasks. The adapted tests took into account ethnic differences of

⁴⁷ Solov’ev. *Godichnyi opyt*. P. 166: “Tol’ko putem serii nemykh testov možno sozdat’ edinuiu sistemu izmereniia umstvennoi odarennosti vo vsem masshtabe Soiuzu v ego raznoplemennym naseleniem i eshche znachitel’nym protsentom malogramotnykh i negramotnykh.”

⁴⁸ For context, see Michael G. Smith. *Language and Power in the Creation of the USSR, 1917–1953*. Berlin, 1998.

a cultural kind and even reinforced them in the test's *inputs*. However, this was done precisely for these cultural differences *not* to be there as factors affecting the final *outputs*. Solov'ev believed that tests needed to expose and measure differentiation at another level, that of general intelligence, which should not depend on the cultural heterogeneity and unevenness of levels of education that characterized the USSR at the time.

The tests that Solov'ev was tasked to develop, while deviating as little as possible from the original Russian version in order to retain comparability, had to be made fully comprehensible to the Uzbeks. And it was clear that using strictly visual materials would not in itself eliminate the need for "translating" tests. The *uzbekizatsiia* that Solov'ev was proposing entailed first and foremost the adaptation of illustrations and images to the local Uzbek *byt*. This was not a straightforward matter and required considerable familiarity with the local culture. Solov'ev's work included extensive consultations with local scholars of Oriental cultures (*vostokovedy*), meticulous instructions to the artist, and the allocation of the translation of instructions to an experienced teacher of the Uzbek language. Solov'ev also recognized the importance of the technical quality of the mass reproduction of test cards, given that this could affect the readability and interpretation of the images.

Crucially, in order to maintain a universal scale, *uzbekizatsiia* had to ensure that ethnic difference contained in the test was in some respects *nonessential* and that ethnic elements could be *replaced* when translating the test to another ethnicity without affecting what was being measured. As Solov'ev explained: "We have kept the Russian subjects, but have clothed them, as it were, in Eastern costumes."⁴⁹ Admittedly, though, for some images "no Orientalization would do," so they replaced them with completely new, authentically local motifs.⁵⁰

Other researchers, however, most notably Baranova from Tashkent's SAGU, argued that using purely image-based tests among the Uzbeks could, in fact, be problematic.⁵¹ She claimed not only that, as Muslims, Uzbeks

⁴⁹ Solov'ev. *Godichnyi opyt*. P. 153.

⁵⁰ Ibid. P. 153: "nikakaiia orientalizatsiia pomoch ne mogla."

⁵¹ On what follows, see: T. N. Baranova. *Prisposoblenie testovoi metodiki i izmereniia umstvennogo razvitiia k usloviia Srednei Azii* (dolozheno na Psikhotehnicheskoi sektiisii i Vsesoiuznogo s"ezda po izucheniiu povedeniia cheloveka – 30 ianvaria 1930 g.) // *Pedologiiia*. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 255–262; T. N. Baranova, F. Rozenfel'd. *Opyt izucheniia umstvennogo razvitiia uhashchikhsia Srednei Azii*. Tashkent, 1929; T. N. Baranova. *Materialy po razvitiu risunka u iunoshstva i vzroslykh: II. Risunok uzbechek*. Tashkent, 1929; *Metody izucheniia rebenka Srednei Azii* (Sbornik statei Instituta Pedagogiki i Psikhologii SAGU). Tashkent, 1930.

had a different attitude toward visual culture (especially depictions of living creatures), but also that, thanks to their lack of exposure to visual materials and alleged restrictions on drawing from the earliest childhood (at least among those who lived in the remote kishlaks), Uzbeks were supposedly unable to “see” (i.e., perceptually process) perspective. Based on experiments she had carried out among local women, in particular, she contended that this caused Uzbeks to have problems interpreting images that represented a three-dimensional object on a two-dimensional surface. Baranova did not bring in the question of “race” here, but her claim about the Uzbeks’ assumed *constitutional* inability to see perspective due to their *cultural* upbringing was, in some respects, analogous to the phenomenon of brachycephaly that Shtilerman had noted as being simultaneously a phenomenon of *byt* and a racial characteristic.

Baranova argued, for example, that one of the tasks in the Rossolimo test, which involved putting together a relatively simple puzzle out of a fragmented image of a cockerel, was unfair to give to Uzbek children: familiarity with this type of image would be an essential precondition for solving the task, which was designed to measure something else entirely – namely, the subject’s higher, combinatory skills. Baranova argued that setting such a task for an Uzbek child was tantamount to giving a literacy test to someone who was not even aware of what letters were.⁵² Because of this, she argued that when adapting tests for Uzbek children one should use visual materials that did not include perspectival images, but instead displayed objects as a frieze, representing only the most familiar aspect of each item, emphasizing contours and avoiding shading.⁵³

Solov’ev was in agreement with Baranova that illustrations used in tests needed to be adapted very carefully in terms of both content and form, but he strongly rejected Baranova’s claim about the Uzbeks’ constitutional inability to see perspective; this became, in fact, a major point of contention between them.⁵⁴ Indeed, Solov’ev insisted that there was no constitutional difference in the mental abilities of Uzbek children *as could be established by psychometric tests*, which were expected to measure general mental capacity along a normative scale in terms of deviations from a given standard.⁵⁵ He also argued that there were no constitutional differences in mental capacity that would be relevant in the context of educational

⁵² Baranova. *Prisposoblenie testovoi metodiki*. P. 257.

⁵³ *Ibid.* P. 262.

⁵⁴ Solov’ev. *Iz opyta*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* P. 41.

expectations.⁵⁶ This fact justified the creation of universal mental tests in different ethnic variants.

And yet, Solov'ev did not say that the "psyches" of the national minorities and the Europeans "did not display differences."⁵⁷ In his view, life (*bytie*) determined consciousness (*soznanie*). The Uzbek *bytie* (to be distinguished from *byt* since it encompassed the living context in a much broader way, to include a centuries-long history in a geographically specific environment) was indeed profoundly different from the Russian one, which meant that the Uzbek "psyche," shaped cumulatively across time and space, was inevitably different from the Russian one. However, this "difference" was *not* what was measured by psychometric methods, which established strictly normative *deviations* of general intelligence. Having said that, one could observe differences in how, for instance, Russians and Uzbeks solved the same tasks in a given test. Yet Solov'ev argued that his analysis of, say, different kinds of errors that both the Russians and the Uzbeks were making in solving the same tests, showed that these differences had nothing to do with fundamental mental mechanisms; rather, they could be explained by the subjects' different cultural associations, which depended on what was more or less familiar to them, given their differing cultural environments.⁵⁸

Baranova's work also focused on adapting standard tests developed and used in the Russian center to the local Uzbek population. Although she initially collaborated closely with Solov'ev, jointly editing the collection of "Uzbek tests," the position she eventually developed was substantively different from Solov'ev's. Baranova argued that even when one removed elements that required preexisting knowledge (such as information learned at school), tests, however carefully designed, inevitably expected subjects to possess certain quite particular skills and understandings, which, even when basic, affected outputs in significant ways. Such preexisting skills and understandings determined how, and how well, the instructions were going to be understood, how the form and content of the material presented in the task was going to be perceived and interpreted, and how one was going to operate with this material and perform actions required by the task.⁵⁹ For Baranova, the development of these skills depended entirely on the environment in which one was being raised, with certain environments either fostering or hampering the development of skills necessary for solving the tests correctly and in good time.

⁵⁶ See Solov'ev. *Godichnyi opyt*. P. 160.

⁵⁷ Solov'ev. *Iz opyta*. P. 42.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Pp. 36–37.

⁵⁹ Baranova. *Prisposoblenie testovoi metodiki*.

When it came to designing and adapting tests specifically for the Uzbeks, Baranova's ambitions were ultimately similar to Solov'ev's. She argued that one should design "international" tests, minimizing ethnonational specificity, while making sure to have ethnic versions of these international tests that would be "nationalized" by virtue of making them as "natural" as possible for the ethnonational group in question. The final aim was to be able to compare the data across different groups. However, for Baranova, the point of the tests was not the measurement of innate intelligence, but of the subject's "capacity for mental labor" (*sposobnost' k umstvennomu trudu*), which meant that tests had to measure the subject's fitness for very particular kinds of "work tasks."⁶⁰ Baranova's perspective was essentially a "reflexological" one: for her, "the environment" was important primarily as a context that created opportunities for (repetitively) *practicing particular skills*. In her view, what a test measured could never be "general intelligence" or, in her terms, "innate psychophysiological qualities"; a test always measured the degree to which particular skills were being developed through "practice" or "training" (*uprazhennost' or stepen' trenirovannosti*).⁶¹

While applying the tests specifically to Uzbeks (who, according to Baranova, were culturally different and because of this also different in terms of certain significant aspects of mental constitution, such as perspectival perception), what she was measuring was whether the given subject had the necessary capacity to enter schooling at a particular level and engage in *schoolwork* as required by the standard school program. The school was framed by Baranova (as it was by most early Soviet educational policymakers) as a working environment: "education" was a context in which one was expected to perform labor-like tasks, that is, "mental work." It was the specific demands of "schoolwork" as a form of mental labor that necessitated specific "training" and "skills," and it was these that, according to Baranova, provided the ultimate common measure or norm that mental tests needed to be aligned with.

Schooling in the RSFSR: Edinaia Sistema and Ethnic Deviations from the Norm

Indeed, one of the key drivers for the development of the pedagogy of national minorities as a Union-wide endeavor was the implementation of *universal schooling* across the entire territory of the USSR (*vseobuch*, to be

⁶⁰ Ibid. P. 260.

⁶¹ Ibid. Pp. 255–56.

decreed in 1930).⁶² This was also viewed as part of “cultural development” (*kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo*, lit. “culture-building”), which targeted national minorities in particular. The RSFSR, as the largest administrative unit within the USSR, was under pressure in this respect given its multiethnic composition and federative structure. The key problem was said to be the “significant backwardness” (*gromadnaia otstalost'*) of many of its regions and ethnic groups and the huge difficulties of working in some of its remotest and still poorly known territories.⁶³ The “productivity” of ethnic-minority schools was said to be consistently lower and hence a matter of particular concern.⁶⁴ It was argued that in order to improve matters one needed a carefully thought out plan and proper research, which was where the emergent pedagogy of national minorities came into play.

The strategic aim of the educational reformers was to *unify*, not diversify, Soviet education: the plan was not to erect a distinct system of education for national minorities, but to incorporate them into a single, integrated system (*edinaia sistema*) of public education, which would apply across all the different parts of the USSR (with the RSFSR needing to deal with the challenges of its own multinational composition). The realities on the ground in the 1920s–1930s were, of course, extremely complex and chaotic, varying hugely from one part of the country to the next. Nonetheless,

⁶² On the vast expansion of Soviet schooling at this point, see Gail Warshovsky Lapidus. *Educational Strategies and Cultural Revolution: The Politics of Soviet Development* // Sheila Fitzpatrick (Ed.). *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931*. Bloomington, 1978. Pp. 78–104. On the continuities and transitions between confessional schools in the tsarist era and ethnic-minority education after the October revolution see Tamara Iu. Krasovitskaia. *Modernizatsiia rossiiskogo obrazovatel'nogo prostranstva: Ot Stolypina k Stalinu (konets XIX veka – 1920e gody)*. Moscow, 2011. For more on ethnic-minority schooling in the USSR, see: Jeremy Smith. *The Education of National Minorities: The Early Soviet Experience* // *Slavonic and East European Review*. 1997. Vol. 75. No. 2. Pp. 281–307; Moshe Lewin. *Society, State and Ideology during the First Five-Year Plan* // S. Fitzpatrick (Ed.). *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928–1931*. Pp. 41–77; Yaroslav Bilinsky. *Education of the Non-Russian Peoples in the USSR, 1917–1967: An Essay* // *Slavic Review*. 1968. Vol. 27. No. 3. Pp. 411–437; E. Thomas Ewing. *Ethnicity at School: “Non-Russian” Education in the Soviet Union during the 1930s* // *History of Education*. 2006. Vol. 35. No. 4–5. Pp. 499–519; Peter Blitstein. *National-Building or Russification? Obligatory Russian Instruction in the Soviet Non-Russian School, 1938–1953* // Ronald Grigor Suny, Terry Martin (Eds.). *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. New York, 2001. Pp. 253–274.

⁶³ G. Gasilov. *O sisteme narodnogo obrazovaniia natsional'nykh men'shinstv RSFSR // Prosveshchenie natsional'nostei*. 1929. No. 1. P. 30.

⁶⁴ I. N. Bikchentai (Ed.). *Problemy natspedologii*. Moscow, 1931. P. 5.

those busy planning the *edinaia sistema* (and thus negotiating its very possibility) sought to reduce this chaotic heterogeneity to the problem of managing a much more restricted set of reified ethnonational differences that themselves became part of the system that these reformers were committed to constructing.

It was accepted that there would inevitably be some differences in the educational provision for national minorities, but these were not supposed to be fundamental – all parts of the Soviet education system had to be standardized: the types of educational institutions, the curricula, the tasks demanded of the pupils, the formulation of these tasks, and the length of the programs had to be *essentially* the same across the system. However, it was at the same time emphasized that this system was not going to be a “procrustean bed” into which all nationalities would be forced willy-nilly.⁶⁵ Given that different regions had different needs in regard to economic and cultural development, the “struggle for unity” demanded a flexible approach to the structuring of the system. The way this “flexibility” was framed was that there was expected to be a *single standard* of the overall public education system with partial ethnonational deviations (*otkloneniia*) from it.⁶⁶

Individual ethnicities were to be grouped into larger categories in order to simplify and minimize the system of “deviations” from the standard. The most important criterion was the ethnic group’s level of “cultural development,” where the development of a particular national language (i.e., codifications of, and cultural resources in, that language) was considered crucial. Four major groups were proposed for nationalities within the RSFSR: Group A assembled the least developed ethnicities and included all northern populations of the tundra (e.g., the Tungus or the Nenets);⁶⁷ Group B was formed of relatively small populations within the RSFSR (the Kazakhs and the Oirot, for example) deemed to be at a low level of development, given that they were still predominantly illiterate and leading a nomadic or seminomadic lifestyle. Group C1 (V in the Cyrillic alphabet order) were the larger groups within the RSFSR that were similarly considered to be at a lower level of development (e.g., the Chuvash, the Tatars, and the peoples of the Northern Caucasus, for instance). Finally, in Group C2 were other larger nationalities – those considered to be at a higher level of cultural de-

⁶⁵ Gasilov. O sisteme narodnogo obrazovaniia. P. 31

⁶⁶ Ibid. P. 31: “chastichnye natsional’nye otkloneniia ot edinoi sistemy narodnogo obrazovaniia.”

⁶⁷ For more detail on Russian attitudes towards the small peoples of the north, see Yuri Slezkine. *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North*. Ithaca, 1994.

velopment, such as the Germans, Jews, Latvians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Estonians, and Finns.⁶⁸

Language was considered to be the key issue in ethnic-minority schooling within the integrated education system.⁶⁹ The underlying principle was expected to be the maximal development of schooling in the native languages of the minorities. However, it was recognized that there were nationalities where the native language was still insufficiently developed and where the role of Russian had to predominate in the educational context. This was especially the case with Group A, but also included most of those in groups B and C1. Those in group C2 could, in principle, ensure schooling in their own languages right up to higher education. Russian, however, was treated as “the obligatory attribute of all national minority educational establishments.”⁷⁰ It was this that led to what was expressed as the central “deviation” within the *edinaia sistema* – namely, the inclusion of at least two languages in the program of ethnic minority schools, something that increased pedagogical complexity as well as workload, affecting the ability of these schools to deliver on the standardized programs and meet the necessary “production” targets in terms of educational outputs.

The idea of articulating this as an ethnonational “deviation” within the system required that both teachers and pupils in ethnic-minority schools be assisted in fulfilling standard educational norms based on centrally set programs within the *edinaia sistema*. This opened up questions not only of educational resources in a given language but also of differences in the time needed to deliver on the programs, and, crucially, potential differences in the abilities and educational preparedness of ethnic minorities to meet the system’s normative expectations.⁷¹ It was in this context that assessments carried out by pedologists who worked with ethnic-minority schools became vital.

One of the key organizations with an established record of pedological work in the RSFSR’s ethnic-minority schooling was the Moscow Tatar House of Enlightenment (*Tatarskii dom prosveshcheniia*; TDP).⁷² TDP had a pedology lab, headed by Iroglo N. Bikchentai and set up in 1926 with

⁶⁸ Gasilov. O sisteme narodnogo obrazovaniia. P. 32.

⁶⁹ For background, see Harry Lipset. The Status of National Minority Languages in Soviet Education // Soviet Studies. 1967. Vol. 19. No. 2. Pp. 181–189.

⁷⁰ Gasilov. O sisteme narodnogo obrazovaniia. P. 34.

⁷¹ I. N. Bikchentai. Pedologiia i natsshkola // Problemy natspedesologii. Pp. 277–278.

⁷² Pedologicheskii kabinet pri Tatdomprose v Moskve // Pedologiia. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 288–289. See also I. N. Bikchentai. Predislovie // Problemy natspedesologii. Pp. 5–10.

the task of servicing Tatar schools (*tatshkoly*) in Moscow, conducting both regular monitoring (*obsledovanie*) and research (*issledovanie*) on children of Tatar families (*tatdety*) living in the Soviet capital. To this end TDP pedologists carried out anthropometric, psychometric, and educationalist research (the latter focusing mostly on the role of bilingualism in Tatar schooling).⁷³

Bikhentai led on the psychometric testing of schoolchildren in five Moscow Tatar schools using, in particular, the Binet test in the redaction of the Russian educational psychologist A. P. Boltunov and translated into Tatar.⁷⁴ The key outputs of the Binet–Boltunov test were two figures – a figure for “intellectual development” (*intellektual’noe razvitie*; expressed as IR), essentially similar to IQ;⁷⁵ and a figure for “intellectual level” (*intellektual’nyi uroven’*), the term used for “mental age,” expressed in years, months, and days, to then be related to the “passport (i.e., biological) age” (*passportnyi vozrast*). Bikhentai was interested in average figures for individual schools and for all the schools taken together. In Bikhentai’s estimation, the Moscow-based Tatar schoolchildren had IRs broadly matching Russian averages (around 90). However, the tests showed that the *mental age* of Tatar schoolchildren lagged behind *their own* biological age by eight months and twenty-four days.⁷⁶ He believed that this could be explained by the fact that Tatar children tended to start school later than was normally expected, due to illiteracy and poverty in the family, and that their schooling was, on aver-

⁷³ Z. G. Lavrova-Bikhentai. Fizicheskoe razvitie moskovskikh shkol’nikov-tatar // Pedologiya. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 263–270; I. N. Bikhentai, Z. Karimova. Intellektual’nyi uroven’ tatarskikh shkol’nikov Moskvy po kollektivnomu metodu Bine // Pedologiya. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 271–278; Bikhentai. Problemy natspedologii; I. N. Bikhentai. Ocherednye zadachi natspedologii. Pedologiya. 1931. No. 7–8. Pp. 31–36.

⁷⁴ I. N. Bikhenta, Z. Karimova. “Intellektual’nyi” uroven’ moskovskikh tatarskikh shkol’nikov po kollektivnomu Bine // Problemy natspedologii. Pp. 56–73; I. N. Bikhentai. Proverka testov imeiushchikhsia na tatarskom iazyke // Problemy natspedologii. Pp. 112–131. On a related study using the Rossolimo test, see I. P. Shumskii, S. Mansurov. Psikhologicheskii uroven’ russkikh i tatarskikh detei po Rossolimo // Problemy natspedologii. Pp. 202–231.

⁷⁵ The numerical value for IR was close to the IQ value obtained by other versions of the Binet test. However, the idea behind IR was that it measured not “intelligence” as a given property, but a more relative value of “development,” which was meant also to capture and reflect changing and changeable environmental conditions. See: Bikhentai, Karimova. “Intellektual’nyi” uroven’ // Problemy natspedologii. P. 58 (footnote 1); Bikhentai. Pedologiya i natsshkola. P. 285.

⁷⁶ Bikhentai, Karimova. “Intellektual’nyi” uroven’ // Problemy natspedologii. P. 58; Bikhentai, Karimova. Intellektual’nyi uroven’ // Pedologiya. P. 277.

age, fairly irregular.⁷⁷ He also highlighted variability in the test results by school (e.g., School no. 27 was considered more advanced than the others), linking this to the socioeconomic level of Tatars in different parts of the city and also to the differing educational conditions and quality of personnel in different schools.

Bikchentai insisted that Tatar children's intellectual and scholastic development depended entirely on their environment and he rejected any idea that they might be underachieving due to some inherent "racial characteristic." His proof that environment trumped race was that the unequal intellectual development among Tatar children, who were all of the same "race," correlated closely with the unevenness of their experiences of upbringing and schooling. In line with standard pedagogical practice at the time, Bikchentai recommended better streaming by ability and the formation of special classes for underachievers and those repeating years. He also suggested measures for improving the children's material conditions, such as setting up boarding schools or supplying pupils with better shoes, and the enhancement of propaganda work among parents in order to eradicate cultural backwardness in the children's homes.

Bikchentai insisted that the approximately nine-month mental-age lag that he had established did not mean that Tatars were behind Russians in terms of intelligence; on the contrary, he consistently stressed that *tatdети* were in terms of both physical and mental development on a par with Russian schoolchildren. What the nine-month mental-age lag meant was that Tatar schoolchildren were nine months behind the RSFSR's established school standards. Significantly, Bikchentai's precise measure of this lag was obtained through the Binet test. Bikchentai argued that there was a neat correlation between a child's performance in the Binet test and this child's scholastic performance (*uspeshnost'*), that is, that the two measures and norms, those of mental development, on the one hand, and those of educational development, on the other, matched very closely.⁷⁸ Bikchentai's use of the Binet test showed, for example, that children in the same class tended to be of roughly the same mental age, despite the fact that they differed, sometimes quite widely, in terms of biological age (because some started school later and/or had to repeat a year or two). Given this correspondence of mental age, as the output of the Binet test, and the standard age for a

⁷⁷ The latter was blamed on the oppression of the Tatars (and national minorities more generally) under tsarism. Cf. Shumskii, Mansurov. *Psikhologicheskii uroven'*. P. 209.

⁷⁸ Bikchentai, Karimova. *Intellektual'nyi uroven' // Pedologiya*. P. 276; Bikchentai. *Proverka testov imeiushchikhsia na tatarskom iazyke*. P. 115.

given school year, as prescribed by the Soviet education system, Bikchentai understood the Binet test as: (a) an effective tool for measuring at what school level (i.e., year or grade) a given child should be; and (b) how far ahead or behind Moscow Tatar schools might be in relation to the RSFSR school standard measured in terms of years of schooling.

Bikchentai was concerned about whether and how Tatar schools would make up the lag that he diagnosed using the Binet test. His key proposal for solving this problem, aside from trying to improve the material and cultural conditions in which Tatar children were being raised and educated, was to lengthen the obligatory period of schooling, that is, to increase the number of years that Tatar children spent in primary school.⁷⁹ The lengthening of the period of schooling (*udlinenie srokov obucheniia*) for ethnic minorities (by at least one year for primary schools) was, indeed, discussed at this time as one of the potential ethnonational “deviations” from the integrated system of public education.⁸⁰ This “deviation” was defended principally by the argument of the additional burden of working in two different languages. Most widespread were proposals for primary schools for national minorities to offer a five-year instead of a four-year course.⁸¹ This was considered a “deviation” in the sense that the national minority schools still needed to fit compatibly into the overall system. Thus, a child who completed, say, the Kirgiz five-year primary school should be entitled to enter the fifth year (not the sixth) of the Russian seven-year school.⁸²

Bikchentai’s own proposal was to increase the standard for Tatars in Moscow by two years, so that the four-year primary school, which would normally last from the age of seven to eleven, should last six years, from the age of seven to thirteen.⁸³ He saw this proposal as a progressive measure, one that gave Tatar children a chance to meet the required targets of educational development stipulated by the *edinaia sistema*. For Bikchentai, this extension was needed in part because Tatar children had to work in two languages (their native Tatar as well as Russian), but also because their material, cultural, and schooling environment made their “school age,” based on the Binet test, nine months behind expected educational norms. He believed that without such a measure of effectively adjusting the educational standard for the Tatar schools, expressed in years of schooling, Tatar

⁷⁹ Bikchentai. *Pedologiia i natsshkola*.

⁸⁰ Gasilov. *O sisteme narodnogo obrazovaniia*. Pp. 34–36.

⁸¹ See also Shumskii, Mansurov. *Psikhologicheskii uroven'*. P. 228.

⁸² Gasilov. *O sisteme narodnogo obrazovaniia*. Pp. 36–37.

⁸³ Bikchentai. *Pedologiia i natsshkola*.

children would always remain a step behind Russian ones and would never reach the standards required to progress to higher educational levels that would lead to better careers.

However, this was not how Bikchentai's proposal was subsequently interpreted. Indeed, his campaign to essentially entitle ethnic minorities to a longer period in school in order to enable them to go farther in life was understood as an attempt to lower the norm of intellectual and educational development for ethnic minorities (the implication being that Tatars needed extra years in school because they were somehow "slower").⁸⁴ In other words, Bikchentai's idea was interpreted not dissimilarly to Shtilerman's proposal to "lower the bar" for the "Uzbek scale," given the connection that Bikchentai was making between "mental age" and "school age." This was why he too became a prominent target of political denunciation, as someone supposedly campaigning to institutionalize Tatar "backwardness" within the Soviet educational system, while backing this up with methodologically dubious mental testing results.⁸⁵

The Expeditionary Method: The Emergence of Ethnographic Pedology

The wider coordination of pedological work with the nearly 200 "non-Russian-speaking nationalities" (*natsional'nosti nerusskogo iazyka*) across the territory of the RSFSR, and especially research into ethnicities situated in the more isolated areas of the Federative Republic, was entrusted primarily to Moscow's Institute for the Methods of Work in Schools (Institut metodov shkol'noi raboty; IMSR).⁸⁶ This Institute established a Section for the Pedagogy of the Peoples of Non-Russian Languages (Sektsiia pedagogiki narodov nerusskogo iazyka), which was expected to formulate a research plan on national minorities (*po linii natsmen*) within the framework of the "common and integrated orientation of our pedagogy."⁸⁷ Its task was

⁸⁴ P. P. Blonskii. O nekotorykh tendentsiakh pedologicheskogo izucheniia detei razlichnykh natsional'nostei // *Prosveshchenie natsional'nostei*. 1932. No. 4. Pp. 48–51.

⁸⁵ A. Valitov. Za marksistsko-leninskuiu metodologiiu v izuchenii natsional'nogo rebenka // *Prosveshchenie natsional'nostei*. 1932. No. 4. Pp. 51–56; P. I. Leventuev, A. Bagautdinov, A. R. Z. Musael'iants, Mangusheva, S. Nugmanov, S. Tillia Khodzhaev, A. A. Usmanov, V. Khalilov. Protiv velikoderzhavnogo shovinizma v pedagogii // *Pedologiya*. 1932. No. 1–2. Pp. 46–49.

⁸⁶ V sektsii pedagogiki narodnostei Nauchno-pedagogicheskogo instituta metodov shkol'noi raboty // *Pedologiya*. 1930. No. 2. P. 287.

⁸⁷ P. Ventskovskii. Pedagogicheskoe izuchenie natsmen // *Prosveshchenie natsional'nostei*. 1930. No. 3. P. 98: "obshchaia i edinaia ustanovka nashei pedagogiki."

articulated as the “Sovietization of non-Russian-speaking nationalities,” which meant finding a “formulation that would integrate this heterogeneity of characteristics into some kind of new unity.”⁸⁸

However, in terms of specifically pedological research, the institute took a somewhat different direction. Within its national minorities section the IMSR established a so-called Monographic Commission (*Monograficheskaiia komissia*), which was tasked with developing new methods of pedological work that targeted the least well-known ethnic groups within the Federation.⁸⁹ As the title of this commission suggested, it adopted a “monographic” approach, meaning that each ethnic group was to be studied in its own right and in a comprehensive way. This included the description of the given minority’s socioeconomic environment, culture, and *byt*, the study of the ethnic child’s “organism” at individual and population levels, both anthropologically and psychologically, and finally, the detailing of the local conditions and practices of family upbringing and schooling. Of priority were the most “backward” ethnicities, residing in some of the remotest areas of the RSFSR, and the principal approach proposed was the “expeditionary method.”

From the state’s point of view these were minority groups that needed to be urgently brought into the fold of Soviet civilization in economic and political terms, as well as in terms of medical and educational services.⁹⁰ The pedological expeditions organized by the IMSR had, as models, first, economic expeditions, which were at this time being sent out to the distant peripheries to explore the suitability of certain regions and populations for industrial development, natural-resource exploitation, and agricultural collectivization; and second, medical expeditions, which were organized for the purposes of monitoring and improving health in the RSFSR’s undeveloped regions.⁹¹ The latter expeditions were sometimes focused on specific health problems (e.g., venereal disease), but many performed more systematic medical checks, which included anthropometric measurements and blood tests, of the kind that school-prophylactic clinics carried out in urban localities. They sometimes recorded similar features: for example, an expedition

⁸⁸ Ibid. P. 98: “sovietizatsiia natsional’nostei nerusskogo iazyka”; “formulirovka ob”ediniaushchaia eto raznoobrazie osobnostei v nekoie novoe edinstvo.”

⁸⁹ V seksii pedagogiki narodnostei.

⁹⁰ For more context, see Yuri Slezkine. *From Savages to Citizens: The Cultural Revolution in the Soviet Far North, 1928–1938* // *Slavic Review*. 1992. Vol. 51. No. 2. Pp. 52–76.

⁹¹ Hirsch. *Empire of Nations*. Pp. 239–272; Susan G. Solomon. *The Soviet-German Syphilis Expedition to Buriat Mongolia, 1928: Scientific Research on National Minorities* // *Slavic Review*. 1993. Vol. 52. No. 2. Pp. 204–232.

to the Northern Caucasus in 1925, organized by the Russian Red Cross, made particular note of brachycephaly or the “flatbread-like nape” (*zatylok lepezhkoi*) among the Chechens, the same “racial trait” that Shtilerman was observing at this time among the Uzbeks of Tashkent.⁹²

Medic-led expeditions also engaged in forms of ethnography, exploring the sociocultural conditions in which local populations lived, since factors of *byt* were considered just as important as bodily properties in understanding the causes of the pathologies that the doctors were interested in eradicating. Furthermore, in the late 1920s, some of the medic-led expeditions also incorporated psychometric research focused on children. The key example here is the expedition to Buryat Mongolia in the summer of 1929, led by Dr. E. E. Granat and commissioned by the Section for the Protection of the Health of Children and Youth (*Otdel okhrany zdorov'ia detei i podrostkov*) of Buryat Mongolia's Commissariat of Health (*Narkomzdrav BMASSR*) and the Children's Commission (*Detkomissiiia*) of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (*Vserossiiskii tsentral'nyi ispolnitel'nyi komitet* or *VTsIK*, the RSFSR's main executive organ at this time).⁹³ This expedition included intelligence testing among the local Buryat and Russian children, conducted by Dr. E. N. Zgorzhel'skaia. Zgorzhel'skaia used the short Ros-solimo test and concluded that there were no significant differences in the mental abilities of the two ethnic groups living in the region, but did not elaborate any further on this.

The first task of the IMSR's Monographic Commission – assigned to it by the section for national minorities of RSFSR's Narkompros's executive organ, the State Academic Council (*Gosudarstvennyi uchenyi sovet*; *GUS*) and the Committee of the North (*Komitet severa*, affiliated with *VTsIK* and established in 1924 following the liquidation of the RSFSR's Commissariat of Nationalities) – was to prepare a group of pedology students from the 2nd Moscow State University (2nd *MGU*, today's Moscow Pedagogical

⁹² A. D. Ostrovskii. *Izuchenie byta i sredy pionerov v nats-oblastiakh Severnogo Kavkaza* // *Pedologiya*. 1929. No. 1–2. Pp. 214–220.

⁹³ E. E. Granat. *Sostoianie i zabolevamoost' detei Buriato-Mongolii* // *Zhizn' Buriatii*. 1929. No. 6. Pp. 55–61. See also: E. E. Granat, *Obzor materialov nauchnoi ekspeditsii po izucheniiu detei Buriato-Mongolii* // *Pediatriia*. 1930. No. 1. Pp. 48–64; E. E. Granat, E. N. Zagorzhel'skaia. *Mediko-pedologicheskaiia ekspeditsiia v Buriat-Mongoliiu* // *Pedologiya*. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 235–254. These articles report on the same expedition but with slightly different details and emphases. A fuller account of the expedition is available in E. E. Granat, E. N. Zagorzhel'skaia. *Buriatskie deti: Trudy nauchnoi ekspeditsii Narkomzdrava i detskoi komissii VTsIKa po izucheniiu sostianiia zdorov'ia i zabolevamoosti detei Buriat-Mongol'skoi ASSR*. Moscow, 1931.

State University) to be sent on an expedition to the Northern Baikal and Altai regions in the summer of 1929.⁹⁴ The expedition to Northern Baikal focused on the children of the Tungus. The expedition to the Altai Mountains focused on the Altai and the Telengit populations. Reports on these expeditions were published in the journal *Pedologiya*, the second issue of 1930.⁹⁵

The expeditions organized by the IMSR did not include medical staff or anthropometricians and their focus was on the conditions and outcomes of local children's mental and educational development. The Monographic Commission, headed by A. M. Shubert (who had made her name as one of Russia's leading methodologists in the sphere of psychometrics), was expected to chart new pedological methodologies for studying national minorities. In this context, Shubert emphasized the importance of incorporating the theories and methods of ethnopsychology and ethnography into already established pedological practices.⁹⁶ However, the two expeditions included among their principal methodologies standard psychometric tests and the questionnaire method (*anketa*), the latter being designed to explore the native children's mental horizon (*krugozor*), that is, their familiarity with and understanding of the world, both that around them and that beyond their immediate experiences.

Shubert conceded that these two Siberian expeditions encountered many difficulties and had some serious flaws.⁹⁷ Funding was minimal and time for preparations very tight. The participants were mostly students, inexperienced and insufficiently trained as researchers, lacking the knowledge of local languages. The journey to the destinations was long and arduous, and the localities to be studied not always wisely selected, leading to much time being wasted in travel. The expeditions had to be carried out during the summer holidays when the schools were not operational and it consequently proved impossible to assemble sufficient numbers of children for serious psychometric research. This meant, crucially, that the expeditions were unable to generate statistically pertinent data. Moreover, tests and questionnaires were very difficult to carry out because of the language barrier and

⁹⁴ A. M. Shubert. Opyt pedologo-pedagogicheskikh ekspeditsii po izucheniiu narodov dalekikh okrain // *Pedologiya*. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 167–171.

⁹⁵ Aspects of these expeditions are also briefly discussed in Kudrimekova. K voprosu, and Valsiner. Developmental Psychology. Pp. 287–294. For other outcomes, such as the strong interest in the drawing abilities of the Tungus (Evenks) and the Altai (Oirat), see A. M. Shubert. Izobrazitel'nye sposobnosti detei evenkov (tungusov). Leningrad, 1935.

⁹⁶ A. M. Shubert. Problemy pedologii po dannym literatury (Kritiko-bibliograficheskii obzor) // *Pedologiya*. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 279–286.

⁹⁷ Shubert. Opyt pedologo-pedagogicheskikh ekspeditsii. Pp. 68–71.

the native population's lack of familiarity with the tasks and questions put to them. Children displayed resistance, boredom, "fatigue," and distraction whenever they were expected to do "mental work," even when bribed with sweets and pencils.⁹⁸ As a consequence, the expeditions ended up prioritizing ethnographic observation, with a focus on byt, detailing conditions of family life, modes of upbringing, the behavior of parents and children toward each other, children's games, and crafts.⁹⁹

Given that psychometrics was Shubert's principal expertise, mental testing was by no means abandoned. However, the above context of research radically transformed the meaning and purpose of testing, shifting its function from the quantitative measurement of mental abilities as a way of assessing the children's fitness for schooling, to what was framed as a qualitative analysis of the distinctive mental processes of the ethnic groups under study.¹⁰⁰ Due to the small samples and the children's resistances to the tests, the objective of the exercise was reframed as a form of methodological trialing, aimed at creating better testing methods for these populations in the future.¹⁰¹ For example, native children's performance in the Rossolimo test showed that in tasks that measured attention they performed better when they could connect their visual observation with some physical movement in reaction to it (*zritel'no-dvigatel'noe vnimanie*). This led to the conclusion that future tests for these populations ought to prioritize visual stimuli and physical actions (tests *nagliadnogo* or *deistvennogo kharaktera*).¹⁰² It was similarly argued that one should avoid abstract or hypothetical questions since it was these that, according to researchers' reports, caused native children to scream and cry and run off into the mountains.¹⁰³

However, unlike Solov'ev's and Baranova's methodological research, this "trialing" was not aimed at systematically adapting existing tests to the native populations. The expeditions focused rather on revealing inherent (*osobenno*

⁹⁸ A. Shepvalova. Sotsial'no-bytovaia sreda tunguskikh detei na severnom Baikale // Pedologiya. 1930. No. 2. P. 174.

⁹⁹ See: Shepvalova. Sotsial'no-bytovaia sreda. K. I. Usova. Rebenok-tungus v shkole // Pedologiya. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 187–193; I. Bulanov. Materialy po izucheniiu povedeniia rebenka-tungusa // Pedologiya. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 194–207; A. P. Golubeva. Izuchenie oirotского rebenka na Altae // Pedologiya. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 208–221. On the Tungus children's drawings, see also Shubert. Izobrazitel'nye sposobnosti.

¹⁰⁰ A. Zaporozhets. Umstvennoe razvitie i psikhicheskie osobennosti oirotskikh detei // Pedologiya. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 222–234.

¹⁰¹ Shubert. Opyt pedologo-pedagogicheskikh ekspeditsii. P. 168.

¹⁰² Bulanov. Materialy. Pp. 204–206.

¹⁰³ Zaporozhets. Umstvennoe razvitie. Pp. 222–234.

prisushchie) mental characteristics in the given native populations – that is, characteristics that, in a way, exemplified the difference of the populations in question.¹⁰⁴ The researchers' key assumption was that the isolated life of these communities meant that they were bound to be different, since they were unexposed to the "leveling out of distinctiveness" (*nivelirovka svoeobrazii*) that was otherwise characteristic of modern civilization thanks to literacy and mobility.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, a key aim of the expeditions was to explore the previously unknown aspects of these remote populations; and it was the more "outlandish" parts of the data collected that attracted the most attention. As a result, given that the emphasis was both on the distinctiveness (*svoeobrazie*) and on the unfamiliarity of these ethnic populations, it did not seem to matter that the expedition's findings were based on relatively small samples (*na malom chelovecheskom materiale*).¹⁰⁶

Even when studying educational tasks of relevance to the establishment of the *edinaia sistema*, the expeditions emphasized exotic difference. For example, in the context of studying difficulties that the "national child" (*natsional'nyi rebenok*) had in acquiring Russian, the researchers were interested in observing how long the characteristics of the children's native language (the latter's supposed "concreteness," "visuality," "emotive charge," and "magic-like" association of word and thing) were retained in their use of Russian.¹⁰⁷ It was also argued that one needed to assemble detailed ethnographic and ethnopsychological knowledge on a given minority before being able to correctly interpret and understand responses gathered through tests or questionnaires.¹⁰⁸

The ethnopedological perspective that emphasized *svoeobrazie* conformed well with a new rhetoric that started to be used to reframe the principles of normativity on which mental tests for minorities were expected to be based. As Aron B. Zalkind, the leading figure of Soviet pedology at this time, argued at the All-Union Congress for the Study of Human Behavior (*Vsesoiuzhnyi s'ezd po izucheniiu povedeniia cheloveka*) in Leningrad (January 25–February 1, 1930):

Surely it is not right to put questions that had been developed on the basis of the socioeconomic and sociocultural experiences of our

¹⁰⁴ Bulanov. Materialy. P. 204.

¹⁰⁵ Shubert. Opyt pedologo-pedagogicheskikh ekspeditsii. P. 169.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. P. 170.

¹⁰⁷ A. M. Shubert. Problemy pedagogii natsional'nostei // Prosveshchenie natsional'nostei. 1931. No. 3. Pp. 56–59.

¹⁰⁸ Shubert. Opyt pedologo-pedagogicheskikh ekspeditsii. P. 169.

own or Western capitals to children of our national minorities living in their own distinctive conditions of class struggle, climate, culture, and everyday life?! If we were to do the reverse and construct tests on the basis of the experiences of the population of [say] Turkestan and then send these off to the Western capitals, it would be interesting to see how many dozens of percentages of imbeciles would be diagnosed over there.¹⁰⁹

Zalkind's ostensibly "relativist" perspective and rhetoric were prompted mostly by the criticism of pedological research by Party officials from the national peripheries who were unhappy about the fact that pedologists were using tests and surveys to present their territories and populations as still "backward," not just intellectually but socioeconomically and politicoculturally, something that reflected badly on them in the context of the demands and expectations of the First Five-Year Plan.¹¹⁰ However, this "relativist" reframing of psychometric norms relied also on the way that the practice of mental testing, as applied to ethnic minorities, came to be reshaped by the distinctive ethnopedological framework described above.¹¹¹ In the context of studying the RSFSR's most isolated ethnic groups, normativity established by standard psychometric methodologies simply ceased to make sense, no longer producing meaningful outputs, and it ultimately had to give way to a very different research focus on the *svoeobrazie* (or "difference" as such) of a given ethnonational group in which normativity featured only very vaguely.

This went hand in hand with a new mantra in the pedology of national minorities, namely, that "methods" (above all mental testing standards) developed on and for the study of one ethnonational group should not be applied "mechanically" to another such group.¹¹² This principle significantly undermined the legitimacy of any attempt to use psychometrics in order to compare different nationalities. However, this did not mean that testing was abandoned altogether, given that it was still being used across the USSR for managing the school system (mostly for the purposes of routine streaming).¹¹³ And yet, the above injunction complicated the realization of the equally important principle that mental tests were expected to provide a

¹⁰⁹ A. B. Zalkind. O psikhonevrologicheskome izuchenii natsional'nykh men'shinstv // Pedologiya. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 165–166.

¹¹⁰ Kurek. O sotsial'noi istorii kul'turno-istoricheskoi psikhologii.

¹¹¹ See Shubert. Problemy pedologii natsional'nostei.

¹¹² Ibid. P. 56.

¹¹³ Baranov. Pedologicheskaya sluzhba.

Union-wide measure of fitness for productive schoolwork.¹¹⁴ In 1930–1931, the route out of this contradiction was to kick the problem into the long grass by recommending that researchers working on national minorities limit their mental testing research to a (preliminary) “qualitative analysis” of the way in which minorities approached the different tasks set in the tests.¹¹⁵

***Modeling the History of the Mind:
The Vygotskian Cultural-Historical Framework***

The above expeditions examined specific ethnic groups and emphasized the latter’s *svoeobrazie*; however, they also posed a broader question – namely, what methods should one use to research a child, “growing up in a cultural context *more primitive than our own*”?¹¹⁶ The remote and isolated ethnic groups were considered to be of interest and value not just in and of themselves, but because researchers expected them to represent “pure” ethnic types (*chistyĭ tip*), that is, purer than the type found in groups already affected by civilization.¹¹⁷ At the same time, the reason that Western ethno-psychology, which focused on the so-called “primitive man,” was deemed to be potentially useful was that its framing of the psychology of “primitive peoples” served as a model of “simpler” forms of mental structure.¹¹⁸ It was the fusion of the “purity” (of ethnic form) and the “simplicity” (of mental structure) that Soviet researchers expected to find among the Union’s most isolated minorities. This did not mean that Soviet ethnic minorities were themselves thought of as “primitive peoples” strictly speaking; it was rather that: (a) extant psychological studies of “primitive peoples” could serve as provisional models for interpreting some of the distinctive mental structures of the least well-known Soviet minority groups; and (b) that the study of the distinctive mental structures of the remotest Soviet minorities could assist Soviet researchers in constructing general theories about the development of the human mind – about its past as well as its future.

The latter approach to Soviet national minorities was generated, in particular, by the work of Lev S. Vygotsky and Alexander R. Luria. Vygotsky became a significant influence on the pedagogy of national minorities thanks

¹¹⁴ Bikchentai. *Ocherednye zadachi natspedologii*. P. 33: “nam nuzhny merki, sposobny dlia ustanovleniia proizvodstvennogo urovnia detei ... vsekh natsional’nostei”.

¹¹⁵ Shubert. *Problemy pedagogii natsional’nostei*. P. 57.

¹¹⁶ Bulanov. *Materialy po izucheniiu povedeniia*. P. 194 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁷ Ventskovskii. *Pedagogicheskoe izuchenie natsmen*. P. 99.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* P. 99.

to the book *Studies in the History of Behavior*, which he coauthored with Luria, that was published (after some delay) in 1930.¹¹⁹ Vygotsky's interest in national minorities emerged in the context of the development of his "cultural-historical" framework of human and child development. It was the second chapter of the above book, where Vygotsky presented ethnographic findings on "primitive," non-Western peoples (relying mostly on the work of Richard Thurnwald and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl), which was cited the most in relation to the emerging subfield of the pedology of national minorities.

Vygotsky argued that in order to understand how higher mental processes developed in humans one must study the history of mankind, because it was only through the development of specific cultural instruments, such as speech, language, and counting devices, that mental processes that distinguished the human mind emerged. Every child needed to incorporate these cultural instruments from the sociocultural environment into which they were born, as part of the developmental transformation from the "primitive," "organic," "natural" forms of thought to (culturally supported and tool-assisted) "higher mental processes." Vygotsky understood the cultural development of a child as going through four phases.¹²⁰ The first was primitive natural behavior, where there was no use of cultural instruments as such. The second was the naive phase, where cultural means were available, but the child did not understand their function. The third phase was the child's external use of cultural tools. The fourth stage followed the "interiorization" of cultural tools as "higher mental functions." This model corresponded to the story of "civilization," based on the idea that humans mastered mental processes by introducing new, artificial elements into their natural existential situation in order to thereby transform the latter to their advantage.

Vygotsky was especially concerned with the shift in mental structures from the "natural" to the "cultural." Furthermore, he believed that seismic social changes (such as those that came with attempts to rapidly modernize the remotest parts of Soviet Eurasia at this time), could play a major role in creating the necessary conditions for said shift. In his view, the First Five-Year Plan offered a historic opportunity for researchers to observe and empirically verify the transformations that he was hypothesizing in theory.¹²¹ It was in this context that Soviet ethnic minorities became of prime interest to

¹¹⁹ L. S. Vygotskii, A. R. Luria. *Etiudy po istorii povedeniia*. Moscow, 1930. For a discussion of this work, see especially Chapter 9 in René van Der Veer, Jaan Valsiner. *Understanding Vygotsky: A Quest for Synthesis*. Oxford, 1991.

¹²⁰ Van Der Veer, Valsiner. *Understanding Vygotsky*. Pp. 237–238.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* Pp. 242–245.

him and Luria. The most distant and exotic Soviet minorities were for them not so much “primitive” exemplars of the human past, but models for testing a particular, cultural-historical theory of the evolution of the human mind.¹²²

Vygotsky’s ideas proved highly influential in the framing of some aspects of the above 1929 expeditions to Siberia, especially the Altai one, where one of the researchers was A. V. Zaporozhets.¹²³ Zaporozhets was tasked with the responsibility for carrying out psychometric testing on the local schoolchildren.¹²⁴ What he did in the end, however, was to subordinate this primary duty to a Vygotskian analysis of native children’s mental processes as a function of elaborating a theory of human mental development in general.¹²⁵

¹²² The bulk of the second part of Vygotsky and Luria’s *Studies in the History of Behavior* on the primitive man is based on a discussion of foreign examples, with just an occasional mention of a Soviet minority group (e.g., the counting devices of the Irkutsk Buryat). See L. S. Vygotskii and A. R. Lurii. *Etudy po istorii povedeniia: Obeziana. Primitiv. Rebenok*. Moscow, 1993. P. 114. This did not prevent the work from being criticized for supposedly calling Soviet minorities “primitive.” See A. Frenkel’. *Protiv eklektizma v pedologii i psikhologii // Prosveshchenie natsional’nostei*. 1930. Nos. 7–8. Pp. 108–110.

¹²³ Zaporozhets was at this point still only a student and strongly informed by Vygotsky. He subsequently became one of the Soviet Union’s major authorities in the psychology of early child development. For accounts of his achievements, see: L. A. Vagner. *A. V. Zaporozhets i ego vklad v sovetskuiu psikhologiu // Voprosy psikhologii*. 1985. No. 4. Pp. 121–125; V. P. Zinchenko. *Aleksandr Vladimirovich Zaporozhets: Zhizn’ i tvorchestvo (ot sensornogo deistviia k emotsional’nomu) // Stil’ myshleniia: Problema istoricheskogo edinstva nauchnogo znaniia: K 80-letiiu Vladimira Petrovicha Zinchenko / Ed. T. G. Shchedrin, B. Meshcheriakov*. Moscow, 2011. Pp. 363–382.

¹²⁴ On what follows, see Zaporozhets. *Umstvennoe razvitiie*.

¹²⁵ Vygotsky and Luria also organized their own expeditions to the remote kishlaks of Uzbekistan in 1931 and 1932, the idea being to prove some of their theorization in experimental practice. These expeditions did not focus on children specifically, but some of the subjects were children. See A. R. Lurii. *Etapy proidennogo puti: Nauchnaia avtobiografiia*. Moscow, 1982. Pp. 47–69. For a discussion of these expeditions, see Chapter 10 in Van Der Veer, Jaan Valsiner. *Understanding Vygotsky*, as well as the following: Anton Yasnitsky. *Sredneaziatskie psikhologicheskie ekspeditsii 1931–1932: Khronika sobytii v pis’makh i dokumentakh // Psikhologicheskii zhurnal Mezhdunarodnogo universiteta prirody, obshchestva i cheloveka “Dubna.”* 2013. No. 3. Pp. 114–166; Eli Lamdan. *U kogo byli illiuzii? Sredneaziatskie eksperimenty A. R. Lurii s opticheskimi illiuziiami // Psikhologicheskii zhurnal Mezhdunarodnogo universiteta prirody, obshchestva i cheloveka “Dubna.”* 2013. No. 3. Pp. 53–65; Eli Lamdan, Anton Yasnitsky. *Did Uzbeks Have Illusions? The Luria–Koffka Controversy of 1932 // Revisionist Revolution in Vygotsky Studies: The State of the Art*. Pp. 175–200. It should be noted that in the third section of their *Studies in the History of Behavior*, which focuses on child development, Vygotsky and Luria expressed skepticism about the value of the Binet test as a means of assessing innate intelligence (*odarennost’*). See Vygotskii, Lurii. *Etudy po istorii*. Moscow, 1993. Pp. 219–220.

As a piece of quantitative research Zaporozhets's psychometric study was, from a methodological perspective, a grotesque failure, and was subsequently ridiculed as a caricature of mental testing at its most absurd.¹²⁶ However, Zaporozhets was in fact doing something very different from what the tests that he used (especially the Binet test in Shubert's redaction) expected of him. First, Zaporozhets fused the Telengit and the Altai into a single "Oirot" group on the basis that they spoke essentially the same Oirot language; second, he presented them as socioeconomically homogeneous; third, and most controversially, despite the fact that he tested individuals between the ages of eight and twenty, he claimed that age difference was irrelevant, since the tests seemed to be equally difficult to schoolchildren and young adults! He also excluded from the corpus those children whom the Oirot themselves labeled "defective" (*nepolnotsennye*) and those whom he assessed as "Russified" (*obrushevshie altaitsy*).¹²⁷ In other words, Zaporozhets performed a quite deliberate and systematic homogenization of the group under study. This reflected his understanding of his research subjects as not simply "distinctive" (*svoeobraznye*), but also, and more important, as exemplary. Indeed, as a cohort they embodied the "normal" as well as the "pure" mental structures of a population exemplifying (a) humans at a relatively low ("primitive") stage of economic and cultural development, and (b) the "natural" or "organic" structure of the human mind.

Zaporozhets stressed that one could not and should not link the "distinctiveness of mental ability" (*svoeobrazie umstvennoi odarennosti*) of the Oirot to some biological mechanism; their mental structure was not a racial characteristic.¹²⁸ Proof of this was that biological mechanisms were simply too conservative by nature and would not permit the relatively quick changes that one observed in the development of Oirot children placed in new socio-cultural circumstances (e.g., Soviet schools). At the same time, it was not sufficient to argue that the Oirot thought in the way they did simply because they had not been exposed to enough schooling (e.g., the "pedagogical neglect" argument put forward by Shtilerman in his assessment of the Uzbeks of Tashkent, or Baranova's emphasis on "training"). In Zaporozhets's view, there were certain deeper psychological regularities (*zakonomernosti*) that explained the distinctive way the Oirot child (*rebenok-oirot*) remembered, counted, and thought.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Blonskii. O nekotorykh tendentsiakh. Pp. 49–50.

¹²⁷ Zaporozhets. Umstvennoe razvitiye. Pp. 222–23.

¹²⁸ Ibid. P. 228.

¹²⁹ Ibid. P. 228.

The Oirot mind was not interesting to Zaporozhets in and of itself, though: it was there to illustrate the history of the human mind as part of a more general cultural-historical theory of the emergence and reproduction of “higher mental processes.” Since Zaporozhets’s empirical research could not actually prove anything in itself, what he did in the report published in *Pedologiia* was to restate the Vygotskian hypothesis; in other words, he simply rearticulated the Vygotskian model as his interpretation of the “data” collected among the Oirot. For example, Zaporozhets argued that the workings of the Oirot child’s mind made visible the nature of “organic memory,” which was said to be part of the “plasticity of the nervous system” and which was yet to move through “history” before becoming “cultural memory.” The development of the latter (according to Vygotsky, as quoted by Zaporozhets) begins only at the point where man “masters his memory” (instead of using it as a “natural force”). Organic, physiological memory was better developed in the Oirot than in the European, Zaporozhets argued; but cultural memory, which depended on the cultural tools created over centuries and then interiorized by the modern child during socialization, was better developed in the European than in the Oirot.¹³⁰

In discussing how native Oirot children approached another test, the Pintner–Paterson test,¹³¹ Zaporozhets claimed to have observed three different problem-solving strategies that the children seemed to be adopting.¹³² Some children approached the Pintner–Paterson puzzles through sheer trial and error. Others seemed able to solve the puzzles quickly, but without knowing how or why (this was said to be characteristic of the “optical intellect” typical of the “eidetic mind” attributed to “primitive peoples” as well as very young children).¹³³ The third group of children displayed a “planned approach,” supposedly verbalized through “egocentric, planning speech.” Zaporozhets was here again closely following Vygotskian theory and rhetoric; his “analysis” of the empirical material was ultimately a way of rehearsing a particular schema; so much so that Zaporozhets in the end had to confess that: “One must, of course, to a certain extent, admit the *hypothetical* nature of the above classification of approaches to solving the test.”¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Ibid. P. 228–29.

¹³¹ On these tests, see Rudolf Pintner, Donald G. Paterson. *A Scale of Performance Tests*. New York, 1917.

¹³² Zaporozhets. *Umstvennoe razvitie*. P. 226.

¹³³ See also Shubert. *Izobrazitel'nye sposobnosti detei evenkov*. Here the seemingly remarkable drawing abilities of children raised in cultures deemed at the low stage of development are attributed specifically to eidetic perception.

¹³⁴ Zaporozhets. *Umstvennoe razvitie*. P. 226 (emphasis added).

Another example is Zaporozhets's observation of the seemingly peculiar combination in the Oirot schoolchildren of, on the one hand, a certain attention deficit (low scores for *ustoichivost' vnimaniia*), and, on the other, the fact that they were highly observant (high scores for *nabliudatel'nost'*).¹³⁵ What seemed to be happening here, argued Zaporozhets, was that the Oirot child became attentive only when faced with a new external situation. However (following Vygotsky's model again), the Oirot child evidently lacked the ability to organize his/her activity from within; action was always being prompted from the outside, activating merely the biological, organic, natural "preconditions of attention" (*predposylki vnimaniia*).¹³⁶

The reason for this, according to Zaporozhets, was that the Oirot had apparently (as yet) little or no ability to "master" "attention"; this "mastery" was, however, essential for any working environment, whether a school or a factory, where one had to perform systematic, repetitive labor (in contrast to the taiga or the mountains, where the Oirot engaged in activities like hunting or shepherding). This, Zaporozhets claimed, explained the low adaptation of nomadic peoples to organized production more generally. This was not to be attributed to these groups' famed "laziness," or to the fact that they lived in poor conditions, or that they were constitutionally weak. The reason for the above difficulties of adaptation to labor lay, according to Zaporozhets, in the fact that systematic productive work required the laborer to organize his/her actions "internally." It was this that the Oirot nomad herdsman had less ability for than the Russian factory worker. Turning the nomad into a factory worker was not a matter of imparting or accumulating particular skills.¹³⁷ What needed to happen was a "rupture" (*lomka*) of older, less perfect instruments of thought, and the mastery of new, more advanced ones, and this could happen only in conditions of a cultural revolution.

A Stillborn Science: Natsmen Pedology in the Five-Year Plan

The Vygotskian grand narrative of the emergence of "higher mental processes" intersected here with the grand narrative of the Five-Year Plan that focused on the enablement of "backward" Soviet national minorities to "leap across entire historical periods" by being "placed onto the tracks of Soviet [read "advanced"] technology, economy, and ideology."¹³⁸ In July

¹³⁵ Ibid. P. 229.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid. P. 230.

¹³⁸ Ventskovskii. *Pedagogicheskoe izuchenie natsmen*. P. 98: "perekliuchenie ... na rel'sy sovetskoi tekhniki, ekonomiki i ideologii." Compare with L. S. Vygotskii. *K voprosu o*

1929, as the above expeditions to Siberia were in full swing, Aron Zalkind presented research on the development of the “national child” (*natsional’nyi rebenok*) as one of the pivotal problems of the forthcoming Five-Year Plan. At the meeting of the Interdepartmental Pedology Planning Commission of the State Academic Council (Mezhduvedomstvennaia planovaia pedologicheskaiia komissiiia GUSa) he proposed that the pedology of national minorities should form one entire section (the fourth one) of pedology’s own five-year plan.¹³⁹ The pedology of national minorities was to be understood as the subfield of pedology that focused on the development and education of children in national provinces (*oblasti*) and republics, in line with the Party’s policy on the development of nationalities (*narodnosti*). The idea was to transform the hunter and the shepherd into a modern builder of the future communist society.¹⁴⁰

This was one of the reasons why the IMSR planned in the forthcoming year to focus on the theme of “settlement and proletarianization” (*osedanie na zemliu i proletarizatsiia*).¹⁴¹ Its researchers were proposing to study groups such as the Bukhara Jews, the Moscow gypsies, a Jewish kolkhoz in Siberia, and a gypsy kolkhoz in the Northern Caucasus. The purpose of the pedology of national minorities more generally was to situate the ethnic minority child in the radical rupturing of the “old ways” (*lomka starykh ustoev*)¹⁴² and to figure out the most appropriate means of effecting the necessary shifts in their minds and behavior, establishing the laws of the national child’s “capacity for change” (*peremenosposobnost’*), while developing methods for working with the “plasticity” and “pliability” (*podatlivost’*) of the national child’s “organism.”¹⁴³

plane nauchno-issledovatel’skoi raboty po pedagogii natsional’nykh men’shinstv // Pedologiiia. 1929. No. 3. P. 367: “mnogim natsional’nostiam predstoit v blizhaishche piatiletie sovershit’ grandiozni skachok po lestnitse kul’turnogo razvitiia, pereprygnut’ cherez tselyi riad istoricheskikh stupenei.” One should, not, of course, see this declaration by Vygotsky (made in a moment where enthusiasm for the First Five-Year Plan was expected of all researchers) as somehow defining of his understanding of the historical evolution of the human mind. The Vygotskian “grand narrative” was, indeed, quite distinct from the “grand narrative” of the Five-Year Plan. Nevertheless, there were evidently points where these two “narratives” could be seen as intersecting.

¹³⁹ Kudrimekova. K voprosu. P. 216.

¹⁴⁰ Bikchentai. Ocherednye zadachi natspedologii. P. 32.

¹⁴¹ V sektsii pedagogiki narodnostei. P. 287.

¹⁴² Ventskovskii. Pedagogicheskoe izuchenie natsmen. P. 99.

¹⁴³ Bikchentai. Ocherednye zadachi natspedologii. P. 32. See also Iu. Slezkin. Sovetskaia etnografiia v nokdaune, and Y. Slezkine. The Fall of Soviet Ethnography, 1928–38 // Current Anthropology. 1991. Vol. 32. No. 4. Pp. 476–484.

Some researchers, namely, those based in areas where agricultural collectivization was in full force, went even further in trying to align their work to the needs of the Stalinist state. For example, when conducting regular anthropometric monitoring of Chuvash schoolchildren, the pedology lab of the Chuvash Scientific Research Institute in Cheboksary, headed by M. Efimov, took special note of the bodily measurements of schoolchildren whose parents were known not to have paid their agricultural tax in kind (*sel'khoznaog*)!¹⁴⁴ Moreover, Efimov's surveys among the Chuvash children took particular interest in their statements about the kolkhoz, about Lenin, and about Soviet power more generally.

At the center, namely, Moscow, the primary focus of concern was the coordination of this emergent field of research as a Union-wise enterprise. Both Zalkind and Vygotsky argued that the development of the pedology of national minorities required more systematic institutional organization.¹⁴⁵ Already in 1929 Vygotsky lamented that work in this subarea was being carried out through the sporadic efforts of isolated researchers, labs, and institutes. In his view, research done in the localities lacked a methodological center and was governed by random and often outdated tasks and objectives. Vygotsky proposed that the pedology of national minorities should establish a core research base in Moscow, which would be responsible for theoretical and methodological work and would direct empirical studies carried out by departments and labs in the peripheries. These local organizations were expected to perform routine monitoring as part of the service provided to the local population, but their primary research task would be to collect mass data, to test general hypotheses proposed by the center, and to specify the "particularities of the development of the mass child" in their respective ethnnonational contexts.¹⁴⁶

There was considerable excitement about this new subarea of pedological research in 1929–1930, especially in the wake of the expeditions of the summer of 1929 and in preparation for the Leningrad All-Union Congress for the Study of Human Behavior in early 1930. A number of journals started publishing papers on the topic, including periodicals that were not strictly pedological, but were concerned with problems of *kul'turnoe stroitel'stvo*

¹⁴⁴ M. Efimov. Rabota pedologo-pedagogicheskogo kabineta Chuvashskogo nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta // Pedologiya. 1931. No. 7-8. P. 147: "Osobo vychislalis' rost i ves' detei i podrostkov, roditeli kotorykh vo vremia obsledovaniia ne platili sel'khoznaoga."

¹⁴⁵ Vygotskii. K voprosu o plane.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. P. 372.

among the national minorities (e.g., *Prosveshchenie natsional'nostei, Revoliutsiia i natsional'nost'*, *Narodnoe prosveshchenie, Revoliutsiia i pis'mennost'*, *Prosveshchenie Sibiri*).¹⁴⁷ Pedology's flagship journal, *Pedologiya*, devoted an entire issue to this topic (1930, no. 2, edited by Zalkind), basing it mostly on papers delivered at the Leningrad Human Behavior Congress earlier that year.

Slightly different labels were used to refer to this domain of pedagogical research, namely: (a) *pedologiya natsional'nykh men'shinstv* (pedology of national minorities) or *natsmen pedologiya* for short; and (b) *pedologiya natsional'nostei* (pedology of nationalities), also rendered as *natsional'naia pedologiya* (national pedology) or *pedologiya detei-natsionalov* (pedology of national children).¹⁴⁸ These terms were not exactly synonymous. The pedology of the *natsmen rebenok* was understood to be focusing on the “national-minority child” as a distinct category within the Soviet child population. Some contrasted this framing negatively to the pedology of the *rebenok national*. The latter implied that ethnic-minority children should be studied as representatives of fully recognized Soviet “nationalities,” rather than “minorities,” and, consequently, as members of the Soviet child population in general (i.e., not as a separate category, but as “national” aspects of the Soviet “mass child”).¹⁴⁹

References to “national minorities” were becoming more euphemistic in this context, while at the same time reflecting the quite specific ways in which these minorities were framed as subjects of research. For example, in the context of ethnopedological expeditions that foregrounded *svoeobrazie*, minority populations would be dubbed “peoples of distinctive culture” (*narody svoeobraznoi kul'tury*). In contexts that emphasized the bilingual aspect of minority schooling within the *edinaia sistema* of public education, they would be referred to as “non-Russian-speaking nationalities” (*natsional'nosti nerusskogo iazyka*).

The 1930 Human Behavior Congress in Leningrad became a major rallying point for this nascent subfield of Soviet child science. Zalkind spoke at the congress, calling for all disciplines devoted to the study of man, and not just pedology, to engage in assisting the Soviet state in carrying out the rapid modernization of areas populated by national minorities. The IMSR

¹⁴⁷ Kudrimekova. K voprosu ob istorii natsional'noi pedologii. P. 215.

¹⁴⁸ Shubert. Problemy pedologii natsional'nostei. P. 56. Shubert also mentions the term *rasovaia pedologiya* (racial pedology), although she is here most probably alluding to usage outside of the USSR.

¹⁴⁹ Bikchentai. Pedologiya i natsshkola. P. 300.

called an impromptu meeting (*letuchee soveshchanie*) of delegates from the Soviet peripheries who were engaged in pedological work on different nationalities.¹⁵⁰ Reports were received both from Moscow (where the lead institutions were the IMSR, the 2nd MGU and the Academy of Communist Upbringing) and from delegates representing Baku, Tashkent, Samarkand, and Almaty.¹⁵¹ The assembled pedologists discussed major problems and obstacles, such as pervasive underfunding (the fact that the government's economic planners were not taking the issues on which the pedologists focused seriously enough), the perennial lack of resources and infrastructure in the peripheries, and numerous difficulties experienced in organizing expeditions to very remote areas. They agreed to form a common network and planned a special conference on this topic in Moscow in the future.¹⁵²

It was decided at the 1930 Congress that future research in the pedology of national minorities would focus on the question of "how easily and quickly the neuropsychic organism of particular nationalities adapted to ruptures in their established way of life" and on what needed to be taken into account when designing educational methods in this context.¹⁵³ Priority was to be given to researching socioeconomic factors at the expense of establishing biological differences in human type (i.e., "racial characteristics"). Researchers were encouraged to study class differentiation within a given national

¹⁵⁰ See: *Soveshchanie o pedologicheskoi rabote v natsional'nykh raionakh* // *Pedologiya*. 1930. No. 2. Pp. 289–290; *Rabota natsmensektsii Instituta nauchnoi pedagogiki pri 2 MGU* // *Pedologiya*. 1930. No. 2. P. 288; *Pedologicheskaya laboratoriya Bakinskogo ONO* // *Pedologiya*. 1931. No. 1. P. 70.

¹⁵¹ There were, of course, many other regional labs that specialized in the study of national minorities, such as those in Kazan, Cheboksary, and Krasnoyarsk, but also elsewhere. See: Z. M. Batalina. *Pedologicheskaya laboratoriya pri Kazanskom vostochnom pedagogicheskom institute* // *Psikhologiya*. 1930. Vol. 3. No. 1. Pp. 127–133; Efimov. *Rabota pedologo-pedagogicheskogo kabineta*. S. N. Tseniuga. *Pedologicheskaya sluzhba v uchebnykh zavedeniakh Prieniseiskogo kraia (1920–1930 gg.)*.

¹⁵² Not long after, as acting president of the Interdepartmental Pedology Commission, Vygotsky issued a call to the peripheries proposing a conference devoted specifically to *natsmen* pedology, the aim being to collect information on work done in different parts of the Union. The key areas of interest were expected to be the study of hygiene conditions, the development of mental testing, and the rationalization of education "in national conditions" (*v natsional'nykh usloviyakh*), as well as the planning of expeditionary work and the development of ethnopsychology. L. S. Vygotskii, A. Pechatnikov. *Plan sozyva konferentsii po natsmenpedologii* // *Pedologiya*. 1930. No. 4. Pp. 529–530. See also Bikhentai. *Pedologiya i natsshkola* (speech at a conference of *natsmenavtory* that took place in Moscow on 22 October 1930).

¹⁵³ Shubert. *Problemy pedagogii natsional'nostei*. P. 56.

group and to highlight issues of “class struggle” as something critical to national groups’ “breaking with the old ways.” And finally, pedologists were instructed to foreground potentials and opportunities, forward-looking developments and positive shifts, rather than to describe backwardness, diagnose problems, or stress challenges, as tended to be the case prior to 1930.

Thus, already at this relatively early stage (i.e., the midpoint of the First Five-Year Plan), the declared mission of hauling national minorities from “backwardness” into “socialism” was in tension with the stated objective of eradicating “backwardness” in these territories and, above all, of including national minorities as equal and active participants in the construction of socialism. The latter was meant to be achieved primarily by means of fostering native cadres in the peripheries. In fact, the eradication of old national elites, the status of which was dependent on preexisting social structures and power relations, and the creation and promotion of new, loyal, cadres from these groups was what the political injunction to bring “class struggle” into the study of national minorities was ultimately about. While it was precisely the more remote, “Eastern,” parts of the USSR (such as Central Asia, in contrast to, say, Ukraine) that were experiencing the greatest push to foster and enthrone new elites at this particular juncture (given that these areas had been slower to integrate into the Soviet political and economic structures during the 1920s), it now became essential to ensure that these newly created loyal cadres were not presented as still “backward.” It was the local Party bosses who raised this issue first (as we have seen in the condemnation of Shtilerman by Zelinskii). But as early as 1931 Stalin himself started flagging the beginning of the end of the cultural revolution, making it suddenly highly problematic for anyone to carry out scientific research that, either implicitly or explicitly, contradicted the anticipated achievements of the First Five-Year Plan in these more challenging parts of the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁴

Researchers working on the pedology of national minorities were, as a result, very quickly caught in a double-bind. For example, Vygotsky and Luria’s *Studies in the History of Behavior* met some stern criticism very soon upon its publication in 1930.¹⁵⁵ The section devoted to the “primitive man” was denounced for political incorrectness, namely, for the supposed attribution of “primitivism” to representatives of Soviet national minorities. Shubert was also criticized for suggesting that many of the ethnic minori-

¹⁵⁴ Slezhkin. Sovetskaia etnografiia v nokdaune. P. 120.

¹⁵⁵ Frenkel’. Protiv eklektizma. See also: Bikchentai. Predislovie. P. 9; Bikchentai. Pedologiia i natsshkola. P. 279.

ties were still engaged in older forms of economy, which was apparently no longer the case.¹⁵⁶ The IMSR was censured for underestimating pedagogical achievements in the national republics and for allegedly not recognizing the “distinctiveness” of pedagogical work carried out by the nationalities whose language was not Russian. In fact, what the pedologists were being accused of was that they and their methods had failed to properly acknowledge the distinctiveness of the achievements that national minorities were making in terms of educational and cultural development (and by extension their advance into socialism more generally).

The emphasis on the *svoeobrazie* of the national minorities, which the pedologists had themselves been constituting in 1929–1930, hereby became attached to their achievements. And indeed, the rhetoric of the Five-Year Plan nearing completion did not permit anyone to put into doubt that the plan’s projected overall achievements were being rapidly approached. The argument that “achievements” in the national peripheries could and should be distinctive – that is, the argument that each national minority had its own modes, forms, and norms of what was the necessary “achievement” in the context of the First Five-Year Plan – bolstered the argument that the First Five-Year Plan was indeed being realized as projected. Thus, national minorities were, in effect, granted (at least rhetorically, and to a large extent tacitly) their own specific “norms” of development, which one was not expected to compare to those from other parts of the Union.

This shift required a fairly aggressive delegitimation of the existing elaborate structure of normative frameworks, research methodologies, and general theories that pedology had been using to account for – that is, define, measure, and explain – “development” among the children of Soviet ethnic minorities in the context of Soviet upbringing and education in general. In other words, what was required was a political as well as a scientific delegitimation of the pedology of national minorities as such. Indeed, by 1932, the year that the First Five-Year Plan was declared complete, the pedology of national minorities began to collapse under the pressure of accusations of incompetence and allegations of the supposedly chauvinist slandering of minority groups.¹⁵⁷ Practically all key figures in this subfield were denounced and called upon to repent. It was easiest to read political incorrectness into some of the older works, based on research carried out before Stalin’s “Great Break” (say, by Shtilerman or some of the other

¹⁵⁶ P. Nikolaev. Ob odnoi iz zadach marksistko-leninskoi pedagogiki // Prosveshchenie natsional’nostei. 1931. No. 4. Pp. 34–40.

¹⁵⁷ Kudrimekova. K voprosu.

Tashkent doctors).¹⁵⁸ However, it also became vital to critique more recent publications, especially those that had turned the pedology of national minorities into a more systematically organized subfield of child science research, such as the themed issue of *Pedologiya* (1930, no. 2), edited by Zalkind, or the collection of research papers titled *Problemy natspedologii*, edited by Bikchentai.¹⁵⁹

At this point, the only “deviation” of relevance was the pedologists’ deviations from the Party line. Even researchers who seemed loyal and well-intentioned,¹⁶⁰ such as Bikchentai, could be accused simultaneously of both “rightist” and “leftist” departures from it.¹⁶¹ Criticism was often disingenuous, skewing and misrepresenting arguments to fit the political charges. The alleged “rightists” were accused of overemphasizing outdated ethnic customs and traditions (e.g., in adaptations of tests), while the alleged “leftists” were criticized for overemphasizing the need for “leveling out” (*nivelirovka*), which was interpreted as assimilationism (e.g., in seeking to enforce the standardization of schooling). In the context of the achievements of the First Five-Year Plan, the “rightists” were said to be *underestimating* the achieved development of national minorities, while the “leftists” were said to be *overestimating* it.

Pedologists were encouraged to critique each other and they did this readily since they were often methodological opponents to begin with, even if they had relatively few stakes in politics (apart from saving their own necks). They were all, of course, also being driven to self-criticism (*samokritika*). Each new demonstration of *samokritika* had the aim of prompting other pedologists and institutions to respond with further (self)critique.¹⁶² Pavel P. Blonsky’s 1932 condemnation of the state of play in *natsmen* pedology was typical of the trend.¹⁶³ Blonsky lambasted this subfield’s methodological

¹⁵⁸ Another key early work that pioneered the use of the Binet test on ethnic minorities was F. P. Petrov. *Opyt issledovaniia intellektual’nogo razvitiia chuvashkikh detei po metodu Bine-Simona*. Cheboksary, 1928. See also F. P. Petrov. “Intellektual’noe” razvitiie chuvashskogo rebenka // *Problemy natspedologii*. Pp. 253–261. Petrov’s research was critiqued especially in M. Efimov. F. P. Petrov, *Opyt issledovaniia intellektual’nogo razvitiia chuvashkikh detei po metodu Bine-Simona*, 1928 // *Pedologiya*. 1931. No. 7–8. Pp. 127–128, given that Efimov too focused on the Chuvash.

¹⁵⁹ Valitov. *Za marksistsko-leninskuiu metodologiyu*. Pp. 51–56.

¹⁶⁰ See, e.g., Bikchentai. *Ocherednye zadachi natspedologii*.

¹⁶¹ I. N. Bikchentai. *Pis’mo v zhurnal “Prosveshchenie natsional’nostei” // Prosveshchenie natsional’nostei*. 1932. No. 4. Pp. 102–103.

¹⁶² *Ot redaktsii // Sovetskaia psikhotehnika*. 1933. Vol. 6. No. 1. P. 55.

¹⁶³ Blonskii. *O nekotorykh tendentsiakh*. See also: Valitov. *Za marksistsko-leninskuiu metodologiyu*. Leventuev et al. *Protiv velikoderzhavnogo shovinizma*.

eclecticism and carefreeness, which made it adopt, unwittingly but inevitably, the pernicious influences of “bourgeois science,” with its imperialist and colonialist biases, which led either to assimilationism (typical of the United States) or to racial theories (typical of Germany). He argued that these underpinnings were often being masked with quasi-Marxist rhetoric and mere semblances of political correctness, but that none of this prevented the pedology of national minorities from becoming a “contaminated sector of our pedological front.”¹⁶⁴

Aside from admitting fault and restating Party policy, the solution that was on everyone’s lips was the preparation of national cadres in pedology.¹⁶⁵ Making the development of the pedology of national minorities itself into one of the achievements through which the national minorities came to join “socialist construction” became arguably the only way to rescue this sub-field.¹⁶⁶ This approach was promoted as being in line with Stalin’s program for creating the new scientific and bureaucratic elite in the national peripheries, in large part by means of ethnonational “affirmative action.”¹⁶⁷ It was the postgraduates from the national minorities (*aspiranty-natsionaly*) who were expected to be rapidly trained in *natspedologiya* and *natspedagogika*.¹⁶⁸ In addition to their being promoted as representatives of that nationalities’ vanguard more generally, a major justification for their being on the front line of empirical research in the pedology of national minorities was their insider knowledge of the local *byt* and languages. It was expected, however, that they would also need to master “Marxist-Leninist methodology” as a key weapon in the struggle against “mechanistic materialism,” “Menshevik idealism,” “great-power chauvinism,” and “local nationalism” in pedology.¹⁶⁹ However, the fostering of native pedology cadres was rather difficult to achieve in the short time envisaged. For example, when a group of eight postgraduates (five Uzbeks, a Tatar, a Tajik, and an Armenian) were sent from the Uzbek Pedagogical Academy to Moscow and Leningrad in the

¹⁶⁴ Blonskii. O nekotorykh tendentsiiakh. P. 48.

¹⁶⁵ P. I. Leventuev. K pervomu vypusku pedologo-pedagogicheskogo otdela Uzbekistan-skoi pedagogicheskoi akademii // Pedologiya. 1932. No. 3. Pp. 7–9. See also the brief comment from the editors of Pedologiya (Ot redaktsii) on p. 9.

¹⁶⁶ Leventuev. K pervomu vypusku. P. 8: “Aspirantura ubedilas’ v tom, chto imenno ona prizvana k marksistko-leninskoi razrabotke teoreticheskikh i issledovatel’sko-prakticheskikh voprosov pedologii natsional’nogo rebenka, Chto ona obladaet etimi vozmozhnostiami sozidaniia natsional’noi pedologii.”

¹⁶⁷ Martin. The Affirmative Action Empire.

¹⁶⁸ Bikchentai. Ocherednye zadachi natspedologii. P. 34; Leventuev. K pervomu vypusku.

¹⁶⁹ Leventuev. K pervomu vypusku. P. 9.

first half of 1932 for a three-month program of special training, there were many problems with the organization of the trip and the delivery of teaching, while the results were modest and ambivalent at best.¹⁷⁰

Indeed, the attempt at reforming the pedagogy of national minorities by means of developing national-minority researchers ultimately failed to stem the tide of criticism. By 1932, pedagogy more generally was on the defensive, with many leading figures, such as Zalkind, for instance, being removed from posts, and with the Party directive being to subject the entire field of child science research to radical ideological critique and methodological overhaul.¹⁷¹ Although there was a certain lull in attacks on pedagogy between 1932 and 1934,¹⁷² criticism started ratcheting up again from 1934 to 1935, not least through attempts to distance the Soviet human sciences from German racial science, following the rise of German Nazism as the Soviet Union's most threatening ideological foe.¹⁷³ Finally, the entire field of Soviet child science crashed by the end of the Second Five-Year Plan with the infamous decree "On the Pedagogical Distortions in the System of the Narkompros" (issued in July 1936), which accused pedagogy as a whole of being a pernicious, Trotskyist and fascist pseudo-science.¹⁷⁴ The reputation that the pedagogy of national minorities, in particular, had acquired in 1931–1932 as a "contaminated," methodologically ill-conceived and politically flawed, "chauvinist" and "racist" strand within Soviet child science, was used as one of the key arguments to discredit pedagogy.¹⁷⁵

Conclusion

The end of the pedagogy of national minorities, like the end of Soviet pedagogy itself, is usually explained in terms of a combination of (a) unwarranted, ideologically motivated, political interventions in science, typical of the Soviet State and the Communist Party, and (b) the relative "youth" and

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. Pp. 8–9.

¹⁷¹ Kurek. *Istoriia likvidatsii*. Pp. 97–98; Balashov. *Pedologiiia v Rossii*. Pp. 153–168.

¹⁷² Balashov. *Pedologiiia v Rossii*. P. 168.

¹⁷³ Kurek. *Istoriia likvidatsii pedagogii i psikhotehniki*. Pp. 99–104. For broader context on Soviet-German relations in science over questions of "race," see Hirsch. *Empire of Nations*. Pp. 231–272.

¹⁷⁴ Balashov. *Pedologiiia v Rossii*. Pp. 169–179; Kurek. *Istoriia likvidatsii*. Pp. 293–299; Ewing. *Restoring Teachers to Their Rights*.

¹⁷⁵ Kurek. *Istoriia likvidatsii*. Pp. 45–47. On the resurgence of interest in ethnopsychological research on child development in the USSR in the 1970s, see Valsiner. *Developmental Psychology*. Pp. 299–308.

“immaturity” of the sciences of child development, which had been allowed to grow much too fast at this juncture, and which had, as a consequence, made some costly methodological and rhetorical blunders, to the detriment of their legitimacy.¹⁷⁶ This kind of explanation, while not inaccurate when seeking to identify some of the reasons for the eventual liquidation of this area of research in the distinctive political context of the early Soviet Union, does not explain what was distinctive about the Soviet pedology of national minorities, nor why this field was so deeply implicated in the contradictions and controversies of the Soviet modernization project at this particular historical juncture.

In order to tackle this question, this article has analyzed the way in which the issue of ethnic/national/racial “difference” complicated and problematized the wider task of pedology in the Soviet Union to determine the norms of development for the Soviet “mass child.” In extant discussions of how the Soviets dealt with ethnoracial “difference” much has been made of the dilemma of whether it was the “biological” or the “social” factors that lay at its heart. And for sure, this issue comes out as a major concern in many of the primary sources on which this article is based. However, from the perspective of the analysis presented here, the “biological” vs. “social” binary does not, in fact, seem as critical as is often presumed. In the 1930s, the issue of “race” certainly became a problem, given that Soviet scientists had to differentiate their work from Nazi racial theories. Prior to that, however, “race” was deployed in the pedology of national minorities mostly as an expression of ethnicized physical constitution that played a part in accounting for “difference” in the Soviet population together and alongside ethnicized social and cultural life, and even ethnicized types of geographical/climactic habitat (e.g., the steppe, the tundra, or the mountains). Thus, the importance of “race” lay less in its framing “difference” biologically (as opposed to socially), and more in its serving as a particular framework for differentiating the Soviet population in ways deemed useful and convenient because they enabled scientific measurement and quantification in normative and typological terms.

¹⁷⁶ On debates reflecting this, focusing on the legacies of Shtilerman and Vygotsky in particular, see: N. Kurek. *Pedologiya i psikhotehnika o npravstvennom, intellektual'nom i fizicheskom razvitií naseleniya SSSR v dvadtsatye gody* // *Psikhologicheskii zhurnal*. 1997. No. 3. Pp. 149–159; B. G. Meshcheriakov, V. P. Zinchenko. *L. S. Vygotskii i sovremennaya kul'turno-istoricheskaya psikhologiya* // *Voprosy psikhologii*. 2000. No. 2. Pp. 102–116; Kurek. *O sotsial'noi istorii kul'turno-istoricheskoi psikhologii*; B. G. Meshcheriakov, V. P. Zinchenko. *Domysly kritika i kritika domyslov* // *Voprosy psikhologii*. 2000. No. 6. Pp. 73–75. For more general arguments see: Kurek. *Istoriya likvidatsii psikhologii*; Slezkin. *Sovetskaya etnografiya v nokdaune*.

Consequently, I have argued that in order to grasp the issues that dogged the pedology of national minorities in the late 1920s–early 1930s, we ought to focus less on the biological versus social binary, and should instead look more closely at the contradictions arising from the interplay of “difference” and “deviation” in the Soviet researchers’ multiple and diverse efforts to establish, and where possible quantify, developmental norms for the Soviet child population. These efforts proved especially controversial when it came to delineating norms of mental development, given that these norms were the most difficult to define and measure, often requiring pedologists to model their quantification on rather different types of norms, such as those of physical development or educational progression. And this was so not only because mental development was positioned ambiguously and uncertainly between what was labeled “biological” (e.g., the bodily) and “social” (e.g., the educational), but also because “deviation” and “difference” were especially difficult to disentangle when accounting for the development of the human mind, whether in quantitative or qualitative terms. As I have shown, critical here was the difficulty of distinguishing “backwardness” as stigma from “backwardness” as a transient state on the path of “development,” whether individual or, more relevantly, collective, in the context of placing entire ethnonational groups on a particular path of civilizational progress.

I have discussed how, between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s, Soviet pedologists (broadly defined to include participants with different professional and disciplinary backgrounds) adopted a whole range of different approaches to deal with the problem of ethnic/national/racial “difference” in the context of accounting for mental development in the Soviet multi-ethnic child population. Doctors, such as Shtilerman, proposed separate norms specific to particular ethnic groups, against which the latter were then expected to be measured. Basing his psychometric research on principles used in anthropometrics, Shtilerman believed that the institution of relatively simple quantitative correctives to final outputs were sufficient to create ethnic-specific scales of development. By contrast, psychometricians such as Solov’ev and Baranova worked on creating ethnic-specific tests as a means of eliminating “difference” precisely in the quantitative outputs, assuming that these should be universal and comparable across different ethnicities. Pedologists, such as Bikchentai, servicing ethnic-minority schools, sought to reduce “difference” to a quantifiable “deviation” from the established standard of the Soviet educational norm calculated in terms of mandatory years spent in school. To do so, Bikchentai (at his own peril) erased the distinction between norms of mental development measured in

terms of “mental age” and norms of educational progression measured in terms of “years of schooling.”

In contrast, those, like Shubert and her trainees, who focused on more isolated ethnic groups, whose “development” did not seem to lend itself to precise measurement in terms of quantifiable “deviations,” ended up abandoning quantification altogether, blurring the normative “deviations” they observed into the catchall concept of civilizational “backwardness.” “Difference” itself was here articulated through the concept of *svoeobrazie* (uniqueness, distinctiveness), which was expected to be described only qualitatively. Both “uniqueness” and “backwardness” together were expressive of the “otherness” of ethnic minorities in the context of Soviet modernity. Thus, these minorities in themselves served as an exemplary “deviation” from the norms of the civilized, technologically advanced, Soviet “self.”

This ambiguous “difference/deviation” embodied by the Soviet ethnic minorities was then harnessed into two distinct grand narratives of historical progress in which ethnic minority groups became, in a conflated way, both subjects of development and objects of social engineering. These were (a) the Vygotskian narrative of the cultural-historical evolution of the human mind and higher mental functions; and (b) the Stalinist narrative of the forcible cultural-revolutionary conversion of ethnic minority groups into modern Soviet citizens by means of the socioeconomic and politico-cultural transformations instigated through the First Five-Year Plan. In the Vygotskian narrative Soviet ethnic minorities became functions of a grand theory of the mind and its development, which Vygotsky and his followers expected could be tested in the unprecedented historic project of Soviet modernization. In the Stalinist narrative, representatives of ethnic minority groups were expected to become one of the main protagonists in the Soviet Union’s speedy progress into socialism. The latter narrative depended, however, on the tacit acceptance of “difference” in the established norms of the First Five-Year Plan and the simultaneous repression of “deviations” from the Party line, which directed the enforcement and realization of these norms.

The pedology of national minorities was thus embroiled in conceptual, methodological, and rhetorical contradictions from its very inception. I have argued that these contradictions are to be located in the tensions that pertained between the notions of normative “deviation” and normative “difference.” Each of the pedologists discussed in this article sought to resolve this tension in a different – ultimately unsatisfying and incomplete – way. What ended these efforts was neither the negation on the part of the Party and the state of “difference” within the Soviet population, nor the elimi-

nation of the possibility of “deviation” from the norm (quite the contrary on both counts), but the fact that accounting for “development” became a problem that could no longer be delegated to the normative frameworks of the human sciences, even when these were comprehensively subordinated to the ruling political will.

SUMMARY

Between the mid-1920s and the mid-1930s, Soviet researchers in child biopsychosocial development became especially interested in the question of ethnoracial differences in the Soviet child population. During the First Five-Year Plan a specialist subarea of research briefly flourished within Soviet pedology. Dubbed the “pedology of national minorities,” it was fostered in concert with the broader efforts of the Soviet state to incorporate “backward” populations living in more peripheral parts of the Union into the normatively framed Soviet body politic as part of accelerated economic, social, and cultural “development.” Focusing on examples of psychometric research done on Uzbek children in Tashkent, Tatar children in Moscow, and more remote ethnic groups in Siberia, this article analyzes how the early-Soviet “pedology of national minorities” became embroiled in a complicated knot of contradictions in its attempt to account for and negotiate the ambiguous relationship between, on the one hand, normative *deviations* in the Soviet child population (a population that was expected to be unified into a single body politic, especially through the expansion and standardization of the Soviet education system) and, on the other, ethnoracial *differences* within this population in the distinctive context of early Soviet efforts to manage the Union’s federative structure along ethnonational lines through the Soviet state’s nationalities policy. The article argues that this contradiction between “deviation” and “difference” reflected one of the central dilemmas of Soviet modernity as a sociopolitical experiment – namely, how to adapt universalizing thinking and utopian aspirations to an “imperial” reality marked by nonsystemic diversity.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Между серединой 1920-х и 1930-х гг. советские исследователи детского биопсихосоциального развития проявляли повышенный интерес к вопросу этнорасовых различий. В период первой пятилетки внутри

советской педологии короткое время пользовалось особой популярностью особое направление под названием “педология национальных меньшинств”. Ее развивали в рамках усилий советского государства по интеграции “отсталого” населения окраин в общее политическое тело, как части ускоренного экономического, социального и культурного “развития”. В данной статье раннесоветская “педология национальных меньшинств” исследуется на примерах психометрического изучения узбекских детей в Ташкенте, татарских детей в Москве и детей отдаленных народностей Сибири. Пытаясь описать и компенсировать противоречивые отношения между нормативными “отклонениями” среди советских детей (которых предполагалось объединить в единое политическое целое, прежде всего, путем расширения и стандартизации советской образовательной системы) и этнорасовыми “различиями” между ними в специфическом контексте раннесоветской национальной политики, направленной на сочетание союзной федеративной структуры с этнонациональным принципом, новое направление в педологии столкнулось с узлом противоречий. Автор статьи доказывает, что это противоречие между “отклонениями” и “различиями” отражало центральную дилемму советской модерности как социально-политического эксперимента: как совместить универсализирующее мышление и утопические стремления с “имперской” реальностью бессистемного разнообразия.